This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

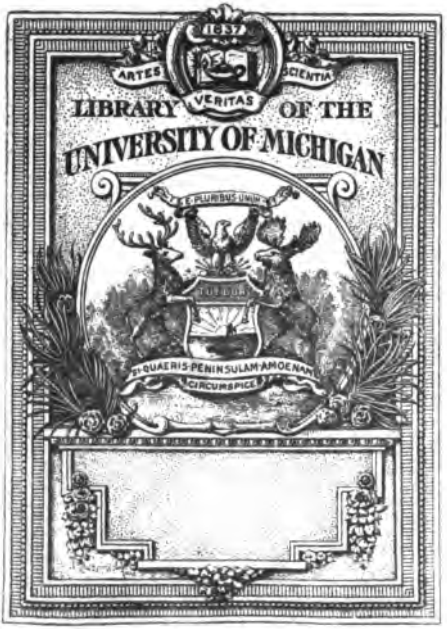
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


ARTES
VERITAS
SCIENTIA
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
E PLURIBUS UNUM
SI QUAERIS PENINSULAM AMOENAM
CIRCUMSPICE

£28
B6277d
N1

COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 1192.

A DAUGHTER OF HETH BY WILLIAM BLACK.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By the same Author,

IN SILK ATTIRE	2 vols.
ADVENTURES OF A PHAETON	2 vols.
A PRINCESS OF THULE	2 vols.
KILMENY	1 vol.
THE MAID OF KILLEENA	1 vol.
THREE FEATHERS	2 vols.
LADY SILVERDALE'S SWEETHEART	1 vol.
MADCAP VIOLET	2 vols.
GREEN PASTURES AND PICCADILLY	2 vols.
MACLEOD OF DARE	2 vols.
WHITE WINGS	2 vols.
SUNRISE	2 vols.
THE BEAUTIFUL WRETCH	1 vol.
MR. PISISTRATUS BROWN, M.P., IN THE HIGHLANDS	1 vol.
SHANDON BELLS (WITH PORTRAIT)	2 vols.
JUDITH SHAKESPEARE	2 vols.
THE WISE WOMEN OF INVERNESS, ETC.	1 vol.
WHITE HEATHER	2 vols.
SABINA ZEMBRA	2 vols.
THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A HOUSE-BOAT	2 vols.
IN FAR LOCHABER	2 vols.
THE NEW PRINCE FORTUNATUS	2 vols.
STAND FAST, CRAIG-ROYSTON!	2 vols.

A DAUGHTER OF HETH.

A NOVEL.

BY

WILLIAM BLACK.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1871.

The Right of Translation is reserved.

CONTENTS

OF VOLUME II.

		Page
CHAPTER I.	Loin de France	7
— II.	After many Days	19
— III.	Coquette's Dreams	29
— IV.	On the Way	41
— V.	An awful Visitor	50
— VI.	In the Springtime	65
— VII.	Over the Moor	71
— VIII.	Lord Earlshope's Cave	82
— IX.	The Nemesis of Love	91
— X.	The last Day at Airlie	101
— XI.	Coquette in Town	112
— XII.	All about Kelvin-side	124
— XIII.	Lady Drum's Dinner-party	134
— XIV.	The Rosebud	147
— XV.	The Whaup becomes anxious	155
— XVI.	At the Theatre	165
— XVII.	Coquette is told	179
— XVIII.	Coquette's Forebodings	196
— XIX.	A Legend of Earlshope	203
— XX.	The Minister's Publisher	213

		Page
CHAPTER XXI.	An Apparition	227
— XXII.	Earlshope is invaded	234
— XXIII.	Coquette's Song	241
— XXIV.	Coquette forsakes her Friends	250
— XXV.	A Secret of the Sea	266
— XXVI.	Consent	274
— XXVII.	The pale Bride	287
— XXVIII.	Husband and Wife	298
— XXIX.	The Churchyard on the Moor	311

A DAUGHTER OF HETH.

CHAPTER I.

Loin de France.

A DULL gray day lay over Loch Scavaig. A cold wind came in from the sea, and moaned about the steep rocks, the desolate hills, and the dark water. The wildfowl were more than usually active, circling about in flocks, restless and noisy. There were signs of a change in the weather, and it was a change for the worse.

Mr. Cassilis was the first on deck.

"Please, sir," said the skipper, coming forward to him, "his lordship bade me say to ye that he had to leave early this morning to catch the steamer, and didna want to disturb ye. His lordship hoped, sir, you and my lady would consider the yacht your own while ye stayed in it, and I will take your orders for anywhere ye please."

"What a strange young man!" said the Minister to himself, as he turned away.

He met Lady Drum, and told her what he had heard.

"He is fair daft," said the elderly lady, with some impatience. "To think of bringing us up here to this outlandish place, and leaving us without a word o' apology; but he was never to be reckoned on. I have seen him get into a frightful temper, and walk out o' my house, just because a young leddy friend o' mine would maintain that he looked like a married man."

"How is my niece?" said the Minister.

"I was about to tell ye, sir," returned Lady Drum, in a cautious and observant way, "that she is still a little feverish and excited. I can see it in her restlessness and her look. It must have been coming on; and last night—wi' the darkness, and the wildness o' this fearsome place, and the red Northern Lights in the sky—it is no wonder she gave way."

"But I hope it is not serious," said the Minister, hastily. "I know so little of these ailments that I must ask ye to be mindful o' her, as if she were your ain bairn, and do with her what ye think proper. Is she coming on deck?"

"No," said Lady Drum, carefully watching the effect of her speech as she proceeded. "She will be better to lie quiet for the day. But we maun guard

against her having another shock. We must get away from here, sir, directly."

"To be sure, to be sure," said the Minister, almost mechanically. "Where shall we go?"

"Let us go straight back to Oban, and from there perhaps Miss Cassilis would prefer to go to Greenock by the steamer."

The skipper received his orders. Fortunately, although the day was lowering and dismal, the wind did not rise, and they had a comparatively smooth passage southwards. The Minister remained on deck, anxious and disturbed; Lady Drum was in attendance on Coquette.

The Minister grew impatient and a trifle alarmed when no news came from his niece. At last he went below and knocked at the door of her state-room. Lady Drum came out, shut the door behind her, and went with the Minister along into the saloon.

"But how is she!" said he. "Why does she keep to her room if she can come out?"

Lady Drum was evidently annoyed and embarrassed by these questions, and answered them in a hesitating and shuffling way. At length she said, somewhat insidulously:—

"Ye do not understand French, Mr. Cassilis?"

"No," said the Minister; "I have never studied the language of a nation whose history is not pleasant to me."

"I once knew plenty of French," said Lady Drum, "and even now manage to get through a letter to my friends in Paris; but her rapid talk——"

"Whose rapid talk?" said the Minister.

"Why, your niece——"

"Does she talk French?" said he.

Lady Drum bit her lip and was silent; she had blurted out too much.

"You do not mean to say that Catherine is delirious?" said the Minister, suddenly standing up with a pale face, as if to meet and defy the worst news that could reach him.

Lady Drum hurriedly endeavoured to pacify him. It was nothing. It was but a temporary excitement. She would recover with a little rest. But this tall, sad-faced man would hear none of these explanations; he passed Lady Drum, walked along and entered the state-room, and stood by the little bed where his niece lay.

She saw him enter, and there was a smile of welcome on her pale face. Perhaps it was the twilight, or the exceeding darkness and lustre of the eyes which were fixed upon him, which made her

look so pale; but her appearance then, with her wild dark hair lying loosely on the white pillow, struck him acutely with a sense of vague foreboding and pain.

"Is it you, papa?" she said, quietly, and yet with a strange look on her face. "Since I have been ill I have been learning English to speak to you, and I can speak it very well. Only Nanette does not seem to understand—she tires me—you must send her away——"

With a weary look she let her face sink into the pillow.

"Catherine," said the Minister, with a great fear at his heart, "don't you know me?"

She did not answer or pay any attention for a few seconds, and then she said:

"Yes, of course, I know. But you must teach me how to sleep, papa, for there is a noise all round me, and I cannot sleep. It is like waves, and my head is giddy and rocks with it and with the music. You must keep Nanette from singing, papa—it vexes me—and it is always the same—*trois ans d'absence —loin de France—ah, quel beau jour!*—and I hear it far away—always Nanette singing—"

Lady Drum stole in behind the Minister, and laid her hand on his arm.

"You must not be alarmed," she whispered;

"this is nothing but the excitement of yesterday, and she may have caught a cold and made herself subject to a slight fever."

The Minister said nothing, but stood in a dazed way, looking at the girl with his sad gray eyes, and apparently scarcely able to realise the scene before him.

"When shall we reach Tobermory," he asked, at length.

"In about two hours," said Lady Drum.

The girl had overheard; for she continued to murmur, almost to herself—

"Shall we be home again, papa, in two hours, and go up past St. Nazaire? It is a long time since we were there—so long ago it seems a mist, and we have been in the darkness. Ah! the darkness of last night out on the sea, with the wild things in the air—the wild things in the air—and the waves crying along the shore. It is three years of absence, and we have been away in dreadful places, but now there is home again, papa—home, and Nanette is singing merrily now in the garden, and my mamma does come to the gate. Why does she not speak? Why does she go away? Does she not know me any more—not know Coquette? But see! papa, it is all going away: the garden is going back and back—my mamma has turned her face away, and I can

scarcely see her for the darkness—have we not got home, not yet, after all? for it is away now in a mist, and I can see nothing, and not even hear Nanette singing."

The Minister took the girl's hand in his; great tears were running down his cheeks, and his voice was broken with sobs.

"My girl, we shall be home presently. Do not distress yourself about it; lie still, the boat is carrying you safely home."

He went on deck; he could not bear to look any more on the beautiful, wistful eyes that seemed to him full of entreaty. They carried a cruel message to him—like the dumb look of pain that is in an animal's eyes, when it seeks relief, and none can be given. Impatiently he watched the boat go down through the desolate waste of gray sea, the successive headlands and bays slowly opening out as she sped on. He paced up and down the narrow strip of deck, wearying for the boat to get round Ardnamurchan. It was clearly impossible for them to reach Oban that night; but surely there would be a doctor in Tobermory, who could give Lady Drum sufficient directions.

The evening was getting dusk as they bore down upon the Sound of Mull. Coquette had fallen into a deep sleep, and her constant nurse and attendant

was rejoiced. The Minister, however, was not a whit less anxious, and it was with eager eyes that he scanned the narrowing distance between the prow of the yacht and Tobermory Bay. At length the *Caroline* reached her berth for the night, and the anchor was scarcely let go when the Minister got into the pinnace and was rapidly rowed ashore. A few minutes afterwards he was again in the boat, carrying with him the doctor; while Lady Drum had gone on deck to see that the sailors postponed the more noisy of their operations until Coquette should have awoke from her slumbers.

The Minister's first notion was that his niece should be taken ashore so soon as they got near a habitable house. But, apart from the danger of the removal, could she be better situated in a Tobermory cottage than in this little cabin, where she could have the constant care of Lady Drum? The present consultation afforded him some relief. It was probably only a slight fever, the result of powerful nervous excitement and temporary weakness of the system. She was to remain where she was, subject to the assiduous attentions of her nurse; a physician was to be consulted when they reached Oban, and, if circumstances then warranted it, she might be gently taken South in the yacht to her own home.

Next day, however, the fever had somewhat increased, and the wild imaginings—the pathetic appeals—and the incoherent ramblings of the girl's delirium grew in intensity. The *bizarre* combinations of all her recent experiences were so foreign to all probability that her nurse paid but little attention to them, although she was sometimes deeply affected by the pathetic reminiscences of her charge, or by the lurid descriptions of dark sea scenes which were apparently present to the girl's imagination with a ghastly distinctness. Yet through all these fantastic groupings of mental phenomena there ran a series of references to Lord Earlshope, which Lady Drum was startled to find had some consistency. They occurred in impossible combinations with other persons and things; but they repeated, with a strange persistency, the same impressions. On the afternoon of the day on which they arrived at Oban—the physician having come and gone—Coquette beckoned her companion to sit down by her. She addressed her as Nanette, as she generally did, mistaking her elderly friend for her old nurse.

"Listen, Nanette. Yesterday I did see something terrible. I cannot forget it," she said, in a low voice, with her dark eyes apparently watching something in the air before her. "It was Lord Earlshope coming over the sea to me—walking on the water

—and there was a glare of light around him; and he seemed an angel that had come with a message, for he held something in his hand to me, and there was a smile on his face. You do not know him, Nanette—it is no matter. All this happened long ago—in another country—and now that I am home again it is forgotten, except when I dream. Are you listening, poor old Nanette? As he came near the boat, I held out my hand to save him from the waves. Ah! the strange light there was. It seemed to grow day, although we were up in the north, under the black mountains, and in the shadow of the night-clouds. I held out my hand to him, Nanette; and he had almost come to me—and then—and then—there was a change—and all the light vanished, and he dropped down into the sea, and in place of Lord Earlshope there was a fearful thing —a devil—that laughed in the water, and swam round, and I ran back for fear. There was a red light around him in the sea, and he laughed, and stretched up his hands. Oh, it was dreadful—dreadful—Nanette!" the girl continued, moaning and shuddering. "I cannot close my eyes but I see it —and yet, where is the letter I got before he sank into the water?"

She searched underneath her pillow for the note which Lord Earlshope had left for her on the night

before he went. She insisted on Lady Drum reading it. The old lady opened the folded bit of paper, and read the following words—"*I was mad last night. I do not know what I said. Forgive me; for I cannot forgive myself.*"

What should she do with this fragment of correspondence which now confirmed her suspicions? If she were to hand it back to the girl it was probable she might in her delirium give it to Mr. Cassilis, who had enough to suffer without it. After all, Lady Drum reflected, this note criminated no one; it only revealed the fact that there was some connection between Lord Earlshope's sudden departure and the wild scene of the night before. She resolved to retain that note in her possession for the meantime, and give it back to Coquette when the girl should have recovered.

"May I keep this message for a little while?" she asked, gently.

Coquette looked at it, and turned away her head and murmured to herself.

"Yes, yes, let it go—it is the last bit of what is now all past and gone. Why did I ever go away from France—up to that wild place in the north, where the night has red fire in it, and the sea is full of strange faces? It is all past and gone. Nanette, Nanette, have I told you of all that I saw

in Scotland—of the woman who did take my mother's crucifix from me, and the old man I used to fear, and the Highlander, and my brave cousin Tom, and my uncle, and—and another who has got no name now! I should not have gone there—away from you, my poor old Nanette—but now it is all over, and I am come home again. How pleasant it is to be in the warm south again, Nanette! I shall never leave France any more—I will stay here, under the bright skies, and we shall go down to the river, as we used to do, and you will sing to me. Nanette, Nanette, it is a pretty song—but so very sad—do you not know that this is the day of our return to France—that we are at home now—at home?"

CHAPTER II.

After many Days.

It was a Sunday morning in winter. For nearly a fortnight Airlie Moor had been lying under a "black frost." The wind that whistled through the leafless woods, and swept over the hard ground was bitterly cold; the sky was gray and cheerless; the far stretch of the sea was more than usually desolate. The frost had come soon on the heels of autumn; and already all the manifold signs of life which had marked the summer were nipped off and dead. The woods were silent; the murmur of the moorland rivulet had been hushed, for its narrow channel contained a mass of ice; and the stripped and bare fields over which the wintry wind blew were hard as iron.

Then there was one night's snow; and in a twinkling the whole scene was changed. On the Saturday night a certain stranger had arrived in Ardrossan, and put up at an inn there. He had come down from Glasgow in a third-class carriage,

and had a sufficiently cheerless journey. But now, on this Sunday morning, when he got up, and went out, lo! there was a new world all around him. The sun was shining brightly over the great white fields, the trees hung heavy with the snow, the straggling groups of men and women coming in from the country to church, moved ghostlike and silent along the white roads, and the sea outside had caught a glimmer of misty yellow from the sunlight, and was almost calm. The bright and clear atmosphere was exhilarating, although yet intensely cold; and as this solitary adventurer issued forth from the town, and took his way up to the high country, the frosty air brought a glow of colour into his young and healthy face. The frost had evidently neither stiffened his limbs nor congealed his blood; and yet even when the brisk exercise had made him almost uncomfortably warm, he still kept his Scotch cap well down over his forehead, while the collar of his top-coat was pulled up so as to conceal almost the whole of the rest of his face.

His light and springy step took him rapidly over the ground, and his spirits rose with the clear air and the joyous exercise. He began to sing "Drumclog," Sunday morning as it was. Then, when he had gained a higher piece of country, and turned to look round him on the spacious landscape

—when he saw the far hills and the valleys shining white in the sunlight, the snow lying thick and soft on the evergreens, and the sea grown blue and silvery around the still whiteness of the land—he drew a long breath, and said to himself:

"Isn't it worth while to live twenty years in Glasgow to catch a glimpse of such a picture as that, and get a mouthful of the clear air?"

By-and-by he came in sight of Airlie, and then he moderated his pace. Over the silence of the snow he could hear the sharp clanging of the church-bell. A dark line of stragglers was visible on the whiteness of the moor, leading over to the small church, the roof of which sparkled in the sunlight. Beyond that again, and higher up, was the dusky wall of the Manse, over which looked some of the windows of the small house. One of the panes caught the sun at an angle, and sent out into the clear atmosphere a burning ray of light, which glittered over the moor like a yellow star.

At last he came to a dead stop, by the side of a piece of coppice. He heard voices behind him, and, turning, saw two or three people coming up the road. Evidently wishing to avoid them, he jumped over the low hedge by the side of the path, and made his way a little distance into the wood.

The thickness and softness of the feathery snow deadened every sound.

But when he looked towards the road again, he saw that down through the leafless trees it might be possible for any one to descry him; and so he went on again, gradually going down into a slight hollow, until, suddenly, he found himself confronted by a man. The two looked at each other; the one alarmed, the other annoyed. At last, the elder of the two called out:

"Cot pless me, is it you, indeed and mirover?"

The younger of the two men did not answer, but went past the other, and, after a brief search, picked up a bit of string and wire which lay plainly marked on the snow.

"Neil, Neil, is this how ye spend the Sabbath morning?" said he.

"And wass you thinking sat bit o' string wass mine?" said Neil, indignantly, "when it is John M'Kendrick will ask me to go out and watch sa men frae the iron-works sat come up to steal sa rabbits!"

"Oh! ye were sent out to watch the poachers?"

"Jist sat," said Neil the Pensioner, looking rather uncomfortably at the snare in the other's hands.

"Do ye ken where leears gang to?" said the Whaup—for he it was.

"Toots, toots, man!" said the Pensioner, insidiously, "what is sa harm if a body rins against a bit rabbit. There is mair o' them san we can a' eat; and when ye stand in sa wood, wi' your legs close, sey rin just clean against your feet, and it will pe no human man could keep sa fingers aff. And what for are ye no at sa kirk yersel, Maister Tammas?"

"Look here, Neil," said the Whaup decisively, "I have come down from Glasgow for an hour or so; and nobody in Airlie maun ken anything about it. Do ye understand? As soon as the folk are in church, I am going up to the Manse; and I will make Leezibeth swear not to tell. As for you, Neil, if ye breathe a word o't, I'll hae ye put in Ayr Jail for poaching."

"It wassna poaching," said Neil, in feeble protest.

"Now tell me all about the Airlie folk," said the Whaup. "What has happened? What have they been doing?"

"Ye will ken sat nothing ever happens in Airlie," said Neil, with a slight touch of contempt; "there hassna been a funeral or any foregatherin' for a lang time, and there is mair change in you, Maister

Tammas, than in Airlie. You will have pecome quite manly-like, and it is only sa short while you will pe away. Mirover, sare is more life going on in Glasgow—eh, Maister Tammas?"

The old Pensioner spoke wistfully about Glasgow, which he knew had plenty of funerals, marriages, and other occasions for dram-drinking.

"Is my cousin as much better as they said?"

"Oh, she will pe much petter, but jist as white as the snaw itsel'. I wass up to see her on sa Wednesday nicht, and she will say to me—'Neil, where iss your fiddle?' but who would ha' socht o' taking up sa fiddle? And I did have a dram, too."

"Probably," said the Whaup. "Lord Earlshope —what has become of him?"

"Nobody will know what hass come to him, for he is not here since sey all went away in sa yacht. I tit hear, mirover, he wass in France—and sare is no knowing what will happen to a man in sat country, ever since Waterloo. But Lord Earlshope will pe safer if he will tell them sat he is English. Sey canna bear sa Scotch ever since what we did at Waterloo, as I will have told you often, but sa English—I do not sink it will matter much harm to them in France."

"I should think not, Neil. It was the Highlanders settled them that day, wasn't it?"

"I will tell you," said Neil, drawing himself up to his full height. "It wass Corporal Mackenzie said to me, at six o'clock in sa morning—'Neil,' said he, 'sare will be no Bonypart at the end o' this day, if I can get at him wis my musket." Now Corporal Mackenzie was a strong, big man——"

"Neil, you have told me all that before," said the Whaup. "I know that you and Corporal Mackenzie took a whole battery captive—men, horses, and guns. You told me before."

"And if a young man hass no pride in what his country hass done; if he will not hear it again and again," said Neil, with indignation, "it is not my fault."

"Another time, Neil, we will go over the story from end to end. There, the bells have just stopped. I must get on now to the Manse. Remember, if you let a human being know you saw me in Airlie this day, it will be Ayr gaol for ye."

The Pensioner laughed, and said:

"You wass always a goot hand at a joke, Maister Tammas."

"Faith, you won't find it any joke, Neil," said the Whaup, as he bade good-bye to the old man, and went off.

As he crossed the moor—the white snow concealing deep ruts filled with crackling ice, into which he frequently stumbled—he saw the beadle come out and shut the outer door of the church. Not a sign of life was now visible as far as the eye could see—only the white heights and hollows, with dark lines of hedges, and the gray twilight of the woods. The sun still shone on the Manse windows, and as he drew near a thrush flew out of one of the short firs in front of the house, bringing down a lot of snow with the flutter of its wings.

He lifted the latch gently, and walked into the front garden. A perfect stillness reigned around the small building. Everybody was evidently at church—unless, indeed, Leezibeth might have been left with Coquette. The Whaup looked over the well-known scene of many an exploit. He slipped round the house, too, into the back garden. A blackbird flew out of one of the bushes with a cry of alarm. A robin came hopping forward on the snow and cocked up its black and sparkling eye to get a look at the intruder. There were two or three round patches of snow on the walls of the stable; and the Whaup, recognising these traces, knew that his brothers must have been having high jinks there this morning before the Manse had awoke.

Then he went back and cautiously entered the hall. What was this low and monotonous sound he heard issuing from the parlour? He applied his ear to the door, and heard Leezibeth reading out, in a measured and melancholy way, a chapter of Isaiah.

"What does that mean?" thought the Whaup. "She never used to read to herself. Can she be reading to Coquette; and is that the enlivening drone with which she seeks to interest an invalid?"

It seemed to him, also, that if Leezibeth were reading to Coquette, she was choosing passages with a sinister application. He heard the monotonous voice go on:—"*Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground; there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.*" The cheeks of the Whaup began to burn red with something else than the cold. He knew not that Leezibeth had altogether overcome her old dislike for the girl; and waited on her with an animal-like fondness and submissiveness. The Whaup took it for granted that these texts were chosen as a reproof and admonition—part of the old persecution, and so, without more ado, he opened the door brusquely, and walked in.

A strange scene met his eyes. Coquette, pale

and deathlike, lay on a sofa, with her large, dark eyes fixed wistfully on the fire. She evidently heard nothing. Leezibeth sat on a chair at the table, with a large Family Bible before her. There was no trace of a sick room in this hushed and warm apartment, in which the chief light was the red glow of the fire; and yet it was so silent, save for the low murmuring of these texts, and the girl looked so sad and so phantomlike, that a great chill laid hold of his heart. Had they been deceiving him in their letters?

CHAPTER III.

Coquette's Dreams.

THE Whaup went over to the sofa, and knelt down on one knee, and took Coquette's hand.

"Coquette," said he, forgetting to call her by any other name, "are you ill yet? Why are you so pale? Why did they tell me you were almost better?"

She was pale no longer. A quick flush of surprise and delight sprang to her face when she saw him enter; and there was a new life and pleasure in her eyes as she said rapidly:

"You are come all the way from Glasgow to see me? I was thinking of you, and trying to make a picture of Glawgow in the coal and flames of the fire; and I had begun to wonder when you would come back, and whether it would be a surprise—and—and—I did think I did hear something in the snow outside, and it was really you? And how well you look, Tom," she added, with her dark eyes full of a subtle tenderness and joy regarding the young

man's handsome and glowing face; "how big and strong you seem; but, do you know, you seem to be a great deal older? You have been working very hard, Tom? Ah, I do know! And you have come to stay for a while? And what sort of a house have you been living in? And what sort of a place is Glasgow? Sit down on the hearthrug and tell me all about it!"

She spoke quite rapidly, and, in her gladness and excitement, she tried to raise herself up a bit. The Whaup instantly offered her his assistance, and propped up the cushions on which her head rested. But why did he not speak? He did not answer one of her questions. He looked at her in a vague and sad way, as if she were some object far away, and she fancied she saw a tremor about his lips. Then he said suddenly, with a sharpness which startled her:

"Why was I not told? Why did they make light of it? What have they been doing to let you get as ill as this?"

He rose and turned with a frown on his face, as if to accuse Leezibeth of being the cause of the girl's illness. Leezibeth had quietly slipped out of the room.

"What does that woman mean by persecuting you with her texts?" he asked.

Coquette reached out her hand, and brought him down to his old position beside her.

"You must not say anything against Leesibess; she is my very good friend, and so kind that she does not know how to serve me. And you must not look angry like that, or I shall be afraid of you; you seem so much greater and older than you were, and I have no longer any control over you, as I did use to have when you were a boy, you know."

The Whaup laughed, and sat down on the hearthrug beside her. The fire heightened the warm glow of his face, and touched here and there the brown masses of curling hair; but it was clear that some firmness, and perhaps a touch of sadness had been added to the lad's expression during those few months he had been away from home. There was a gravity in his voice, too, which had replaced the buoyant carelessness of old.

"It is comfortable to be near one's own fire, and to see you again, Coquette," said he.

"It is miserable away in Glasgow?" she said. "This morning, when I saw the snow, I thought of you in the drear town, and did wonder what you were doing. 'It is Sunday,' I said, 'he will go to church in the morning, and then he will go outside the town for a walk all by himself. He will go through the great gate, and under the big walls.

All the trees on the side of the fortifications will be bare and heavy with the snow; and the people that pass along the boulevards outside the walls will be muffled up and cold. In the gardens of the *cafés* the wooden benches will be wet and deserted. Then I see you walk twice round the town, and go in again by the gate. You go home, you have dinner, you take a book—perhaps it is the French Testament I gave you—and you think of us here at Airlie. And when you sit like that do you think of the sea, and the old church up here, and the moor; and do you see us as clearly as I can see you, and could you speak to me if only the words would carry?"

He listened as if he were listening to the record of a dream; and, strangely enough, it coincided with many a dream that he had dreamt by himself in the solitude of his Glasgow lodgings.

"What a curious notion of Glasgow you have," he said. "You seem to think it is like a French town. There are no fortifications. There are no walls, no boulevards round the place, nor public gardens with benches. There is a close network of streets in the middle, and these lose themselves, on the one side, in great masses of public works and chimneys that stretch out into dirty fields that are sodden with smoke, and, on the other side, into

suburbs where the rich people have big houses. There is nothing in the way of ramparts, or moats, or fortifications; but there is a cannon in the West-End Park."

"There is a park, then? It is not all houses and chimneys?"

"There are two parks that let you see nearly down to Airlie. On the clear days I go up to the highest point and look away down here, and wonder if I could call to Coquette, and if she would hear."

"You do think of me sometimes, then?" said she, with the dark eyes grown wistful and a trifle sad.

Had he not thought of her! What was it that seemed to sweeten his life in the great and weary city but tender memories of the girl away down in that moorland nook? In the time of constant rain, when the skies were dark, and the roaring traffic of the streets ploughed its way through sludge and mud, he thought of one spot over which, in his imagination, there dwelt perpetual sunshine and a blue sky. When he was sick of the noise and the smoke—sick, too, of the loneliness of the great city—he could think of the girl far away, whose face was as pure and sweet as a lily in springtime, and the very memory of her seemed to lighten his dull

little room, and bring a fragrance to it. Did not Airlie lie in the direction of the sunsets? Many a time, when he had gone out from the city to the heights of Maryhill or Hillhead, the cloudy and wintry afternoon broke into a great mass of fire away along the western horizon; and he loved to think that Coquette was catching that glimmer of yellow light, and that she was looking over the moor towards Arran and the sea. All the sweet influences of life hovered around Airlie; there seemed to be always sunshine there. And when he went back into the gloom of the city, it was with a glad heart, for he had got a glimpse of the favoured land down in the west; and if you had been walking behind a tall and stalwart lad, whose shoulders were as flat as a board, and whose brown hair was in considerable profusion round a face that was full of courage, and hope, and health, you would have heard him sing, high over the roar of the carts and the carriages, the tune of "Drumclog"—heeding little whether any one was listening to his not very melodious voice.

"You must have been much worse than they told me," he said gravely.

"But I am getting very well now," said Coquette, with a smile, "and I am anxious to be quite better,

for they did spoil me here. I do not like to be an invalid."

"No," said the Whaup, "I suppose you'd rather be scampering about like a wild pony over the moor, flinging snowballs, and shouting with laughter."

"I did not know that the wild pony was good at snowballs or at laughing," said Coquette. "But you have not told me anything about Glasgow yet. What you do there? Have you seen Lady Drum since she went away from here, after being very kind to me? How do you like the college?"

"All that is of no consequence," said the Whaup. "I did not come here to talk about myself. I came to see you, and find out for myself why you were remaining so long indoors."

"But I do desire you to talk about yourself," said Coquette, with something of her old imperiousness of manner.

"I shan't," said the Whaup. "I have grown older than you since I went to Glasgow, and I am not to be ordered about. Besides, Coquette, I haven't above half an hour more to stay."

"You do not go away to-day?" said Coquette, with alarm in her face.

"I go away in less than half an hour, or my father will be home. Not a human being must

know that I have come to Airlie to-day. I mean to exact a solemn vow from Leezibeth."

"It is wicked—it is wrong," said Coquette.

"Why not say it is a beastly shame, as you used to do?" asked the Whaup.

"Because I have been reading much since I am ill, and have learned much English," said Coquette; and then she proceeded with her prayers and entreaties that he should remain at least over the day.

But the Whaup was inexorable. He had fulfilled the object of his mission; and would depart without anybody being a bit the wiser. He had seen Coquette again; had listened to her tender voice; and assured himself that she was really convalescent and in good spirits. So they chatted in the old familiar fashion—as if they were boy and girl together. But all the time Coquette was regarding him, and trying to say to herself what the inexpressible something was which had made a difference in Whaup's manner. He was not downcast —on the contrary, he talked to her in the frank, cheerful, abrupt way which she knew of old; and yet there was a touch of determination, of seriousness, and decision which had been quite recently acquired. In the mere outward appearance of his face, too, was there not some alteration?

"Oh, Tom!" she cried, suddenly, "You have got whiskers."

"What if I have?" he said coolly. "Are you sorry, Miss Coquette, that nature has denied to woman that manly ornament?"—and he stroked with satisfaction the dusky golden down which was on his cheeks and chin.

"I do believe," said Coquette, "you did come from Glasgow to show me your whiskers."

"You don't seem to admire them as much as you ought to," he remarked. "Yet there are many men would give something for these, though they are young as yet."

"Oh, you vain boy!" said Coquette. "I am ashamed of you. And your fashionable cuffs, too —you are not a proper student. You ought to be pale, and gloomy, with shabby clothes, and a hungry face. But you have no links in your cuffs, Tom," she added, rather shyly. "Would you let me—would you accept from me as a present a pair I have got?"

"And go back to college with a pair of girl's links in my sleeves!" said the Whaup.

"But they are quite the same," said Coquette. "It will give me great pleasure if you will take them."

She rang for Leezibeth, and bade her go up to

her room and fetch those bits of jewellery; and when Leezibeth came back with them Coquette would herself put them in her cousin's sleeves—an operation which, from her recumbent position, she effected with a little difficulty. As the Whaup looked at these pretty ornaments—four small and darkgreen cameos set in an old-fashioned circle of delicately twisted gold wire—he said—

"I wonder you have left yourself anything, Coquette. You are always giving away something or other. I think it is because you are so perfect and happy in yourself, that you don't need to care for anything else."

The girl's face flushed slightly with evident pleasure; but she said—

"If you do call me 'Coquette,' I will call you 'The Whaup.'"

"Who told you to call me that?"

"I have heard it often. Yet it is not fair. You are not any more a wild boy, but a student and a man. Neither am I 'Coquette.'"

Yet at this very moment the deceitful young creature was trying her best to make him forget the peril he was in. She knew that if the people returning from church were to find him in the house, his secret would be lost, and he would be forced to remain. So she talked and questioned him without

ceasing, and had made him altogether forget that time was passing rapidly, when suddenly there was a noise without.

"By Jove!" said the Whaup, "they have come back. I must bolt out by the garden and get down the wall. Good-bye, Coquette—get well soon, and come up to see me in Glasgow."

He darted out, and met Leezibeth in the passage. He had only time to adjure her not to say he had been there, and then he got quickly through to the back-door. In rushing out he fairly run again his brother Wattie, and unintentionally sent him flying into an immense heap of soft snow which Andrew had swept along the path. The Whaup did not pause to look at his brother wriggling out, blinded and bewildered, from the snowdrift. He dashed through the garden, took hold of a pear-tree, clambered on to the wall, and dropped into the snow-covered meadow outside. He had escaped.

But Wattie, when he came to himself, was struck with a great fear. He ran into the house, and into the parlour, almost speechless between sobbing and terror, as he blurted out—

"Oh, Leezibeth! oh, Leezibeth! the deil has been in the house. It was the deil himsel'—and he was fleeing out at the back-door—and he flung me into the snaw—and then gaed up into the air,

wi' a crack like thunder. It was the deil himsel', Leezibeth—what'll I dae? what'll I dae?"

"Havers, havers, havers," cried Leezibeth, taking him by the shoulders, and bundling him out of the room, "do ye think the deil would meddle wi' you? Gang butt the house, and take the snaw off your claithes, and let the deil alane! Ma certes—a pretty pass if we are to be frightened out o' our senses because a laddie tumbles in the snaw!"

CHAPTER IV.

On the Way.

THE Whaup got clear away from the people coming out of church by striking boldly across the moor. His back was turned to the sea; his face to the east; he was on his way to Glasgow. Briskly and lightly he strode over the crisp, dry snow, feeling but little discomfort, except from some premonitory qualms of hunger; and at length he got into the broad highway which follows the channel of the Ayrshire lochs from Dalry on by the valley of the black Cart towards Paisley.

It was a bright, clear day, and he was in the best of spirits. Had he not talked for a brief while with Coquette, and seen for himself that there was a glimpse of the old tenderness, and sauciness, and liveliness in her soft and merry black eye? He had satisfied himself that she was really getting better; and that, on some distant day of the springtime, when a breath of the new sweet air would come in to stir the branches of the trees in the West-End

Park, he would have the honour and delight of escorting his foreign cousin towards that not very romantic neighbourhood, and pointing out to her the spot in the horizon under which Airlie was supposed to lie.

When would the springtime come?—he thought, as he began to munch a biscuit. Was it possible that his imaginative picture would come true? Would Coquette actually be seen in Glasgow streets —crossing over in front of the Exchange—walking down Buchanan Street—and perhaps up on the little circle around the flag in the South-Side Park? Would Coquette really and truly walk into that gloomy square inside the old College, and look at the griffins, and perhaps shyly steal a glance at the red-coated young students lounging round? Glasgow began to appear less dull to him. A glamour fell over the gray thoroughfares; and even the dinginess of the High Street became picturesque.

"Why, all the sparrows in the street will know that Coquette has come; and the young men in the shops will brighten themselves up; and Lady Drum will take her to the theatre, in spite of my father; and all the bailies will be asking Sir Peter for an introduction. And Coquette will go about like a young princess, having nothing in the world to do but to be pleased!"

So he struck again with his stick at the snow on the hedge, and quickened his pace, as though Glasgow were now a happy end to his journey. And he lifted up his voice, and sang aloud, in his joy, the somewhat desolating tune of "Coleshill"—even as the Germans, when at their gayest, invariably begin to sing—

> "Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten
> Dass ich so traurig bin."

The Whaup had not the most delicately modulated voice, but, such as it was, he had plenty of it.

Presently, however, he stopped, for right in front of him there appeared a solitary horseman. There was something in the rider's figure familiar to him. Who was this that dared to invade the quiet of these peaceful districts by appearing on horseback on a Sunday morning? As he drew near, the Whaup suddenly remembered that not a word had been said by Coquette of Lord Earlshope.

The sunlight faded utterly out of the landscape. All the joyous dreams he had been dreaming of Coquette coming to Glasgow grew faint, and vanished. He had quite forgotten Lord Earlshope; and now, it became evident, here he was, riding along the main road in the direction of Airlie.

As Lord Earlshope came near, he drew up his

horse. He was clad, the Whaup observed, in a large Russian-looking overcoat, which had plenty of warm fur round the neck of it. He looked, indeed, more like a foreigner than a country gentleman riding along an Ayrshire road towards his own estates.

No less surprised was Lord Earlshope to meet his boon companion of old.

"Why," he said, "I thought you had left Airlie."

"I thought the same of you," said Mr. Tom.

Lord Earlshope laughed.

"I am obeying a mere whim," he said, "in riding down to Earlshope. I shall probably not stay an hour. How are all the people in Airlie?"

"I don't know," said the Whaup, "I have myself been there for about an hour, and no more."

"At least you know how your cousin, Miss Cassilis, is?" said Lord Earlshope, in a grave tone of voice.

"Yes," said the Whaup, "she is still an invalid, you know, but she is on the fair way to a complete recovery."

"I am glad of that," said Lord Earlshope, hastily. "I am glad of that, for I may not be able to call to see how she is. In fact, I am rather pressed for time this morning. You are sure she is getting well?"

"Yes, I hope so," said the Whaup.

"And will soon be about again?"

"Yes, I hope so," repeated the Whaup, regarding with some curiosity the engrossed and absent way in which the other put his rapid questions.

Lord Earlshope turned round his horse.

"Look here," he said, "I don't wish to be seen about this place, and I don't think I shall go on to Airlie. I only wanted to make some inquiries about your cousin. What you tell me has satisfied me that she is not so ill as I had feared. Where are you going?"

"I am walking to Glasgow," said the Whaup.

"To Glasgow," said the other. "You won't be there before night!"

"That is not of much consequence."

"I will go to Glasgow with you, if you like. We can take the horse alternately."

"The horse would think you were mad if you were to walk him all the way up to Glasgow in this snow," said the Whaup.

"True, true," said Lord Earlshope, absently. "I shall strike across country for Largs, and put up there. You saw your cousin to-day?"

"Yes."

"And she is not very much of an invalid?"

"Well, I hope she is getting better," said the Whaup.

"Thank you—thank you," said Lord Earlshope. "You need not say you have seen me. Good day to you!"

So he turned his horse once more, and rode on, with an obviously preoccupied air.

"There goes a man," said the Whaup, watching him disappear, "as mad as a March hare, and madder."

Yet, as he walked on, he found that this brief interview had strangely disquieted him. What business had Lord Earlshope to be asking so particularly about Coquette? Why was he riding down on this Sunday morning for the professed purpose of making inquiries about her? Nay, why should he wish not to be seen? It was evident that in Airlie, where no one had seen his lordship for many a day, there was no expectation of him. The more Tom Cassilis considered the matter, the more profound became his annoyance over the whole affair.

It now seemed to him—looking back over the brief time that he had spent with Coquette—that the most grateful feature of the interview was the fact that Lord Earlshope had not been mentioned. He had been quite forgotten, indeed. There might have been no Lord Earlshope in the world, so

thoroughly had he been ignored in that quiet and confidential chat which took place in the Minister's parlour. Yet here he was, riding down by himself within a few miles of Airlie, and with his professed object the wish to see or hear something of Coquette.

The rest of that long walk was not pleasant to the young man. The whole day seemed to have become sombre and gloomy. Why was he compelled to return like a slave to the labour and the loneliness of a strange town, when others had the free country before them, to choose their place of rest as they liked? It seemed to him that he was turning his back now on all that was beautiful and pleasant in the world, and that Lord Earlshope had been left there with such intentions in his heart as were still a mystery. The Whaup began to forget that he had fraternized with Lord Earlshope on board the *Caroline*. He remembered no longer that he had satisfied himself of that gentleman's being a far more agreeable and honest person than the popular voice of the district would admit. Lord Earlshope's kindness to them all—his excessive and almost distant courtesy to Coquette and her uncle —were effaced from his recollection; and he knew only that before him lay the long and winding and dreary road to Glasgow, while behind him were the

pleasant places about Airlie, and Coquette, and the comfort of the Manse, towards which Lord Earlshope was perhaps now riding.

It was late at night when the Whaup, footsore and tired, reached his lodgings in George Street, Glasgow. His landlady had not returned from evening service; the solitary domestic of the house was out; there was no one in the gaunt and dismal house, which he entered by means of a latch-key. He set to work to kindle a fire; but the fire went out, and in the middle of his labours he dropped into a chair and fell fast asleep. The fatigues of the day caused him to sleep on in the darkness and the cold; and the other people of the house, coming in later on, knew nothing of his being in his room.

In the middle of the night he awoke. He was stiff with cold. He sought for matches, and could not find them; so he tumbled into bed in the dark, with his whole frame numbed and his heart wretched. Nor did he forget his miseries in sleep; there was no sleep for him. He lay through the night and tossed about; and if for a moment he fell into a sort of dose, it was to start up again with a great fear that something had happened at Airlie. In these periods of half-forgetfulness, and during the interval when he lay broadly awake, the nightmare

that haunted him was the figure of the solitary rider he had met on the Dalry Road. What was the meaning of those anxious inquiries Lord Earlshope had then made? Why was he disinclined to go on to his own place, and be seen of the people of Airlie? Why go to Largs? Largs—as the Whaup lay and remembered—was not more than fifteen miles from Airlie. Would Lord Earlshope loiter about there in the hope of seeing Coquette by stealth? And why should he wish to see her? So the weary hours of the night passed, and the gray and wintry dawn began to tell upon the window of his room. The questions, with all their anxieties and doubts, remained unanswered; and there had come another gloomy day, demanding its quota of work.

CHAPTER V.

An awful Visitor.

It became noised abroad that the devil had been seen in Airlie. The Minister's sons not only took up the story which had been told them by their brother Watty, but added to it and embellished it until it assumed quite dramatic proportions, and was picturesquely minute in detail. The rumour that grew and widened in the village was that, on the Sabbath forenoon, a black Something had been seen wandering about in the snow round the Manse. The boys, on returning from church, had heard mysterious voices in the deep silence of the small garden. Then Watty, drawing near to the back-door, had suddenly been blinded by a rush of wind; flames darted out from the house and surrounded him; the current of air drove him into a snowdrift; and the awful Something, with a shriek of fiendish laughter, had gone past him and disappeared, and there was a low rumble, as of distant thunder echoing along the hollow stillness of the sky.

That was the rumour of Sunday night and the

following morning; but during the day of Monday there were bruited round some strange stories of mysterious footprints which had been perceived in the snow. A track had been observed leading over the moor towards the garden-wall, and suddenly stopping there. Now, not only was it impossible for any being of mortal shape and limbs to leap that high wall, but there was this further peculiarity remarked, that the footprints formed but one line. A slight fall of snow, it is true, during the morning had somewhat blurred the outline of these marks, but it was confidently asserted that they were not such as had ever been made by the impress of a human foot.

Towards nightfall Mr. Gillespie, having finished off some parochial business, deemed it his duty to go up to the Manse to communicate these disturbing stories to the Minister. The Schoolmaster had a visitor that evening—Mr. Cruikshanks, the Tailor—who sometimes dropped in to have a glass of toddy and a chat over public affairs. The Tailor was a small, thin, black-a-viced man, of highly nervous temperament, who was suspected of having been a Chartist, and who had been known at a public meeting in Saltcoats—for he was a great orator—to express views which were of a wild and revolutionary nature. Nevertheless, up here in

Airlie he conducted himself in a fitting manner—went regularly to church, observed the Communion, never failed to have the mended pair of breeks or the new coat home in good time, and, if he did sympathise with the French republicans, said little about it. Indeed, it was not to be controverted that the Pensioner knew far more about France and the French than the excitable little Tailor; for the former had driven whole regiments of prisoners before him like sheep, and could tell you how the contemptible and weakly things asked for water and bread, using language of their own for want of a better education.

Mr. Cruikshanks had also heard the ugly rumours current in the village, and quite agreed that the Schoolmaster should go up to the Manse.

"Not," said he, with an oratorical gesture, "because ye believe in them, sir; but because the Minister maun be warned to set his face against the superstitions o' the vulgar. The dawn o' leeberty, Mr. Gillespie, though oft delayed, is never won; and the triumph o' the great principles o' rationalism that is progressin' faur and wide——"

"Rationalism! rationalism!" said the Schoolmaster, in dismay. "Do ye ken what ye're sayin', man?"

"Which is not the rationalism o' the vulgar,

sir," observed the Tailor, calmly. "'Tis of another complexion and pale cast of thought. It has naething to do wi' releegion. It is the new spirit—the blawin' up o' the auld fossils and formations—the light that never was in poet's dream nor yet in babe unborn. But I will gang wi' ye, sir, to the Minister's, if ye are so minded."

The two went out together. By the help of the red light from the small windows, they picked their way through the muddy and half-melted snow of the village street. When they had got clear of the small houses, they found the thick snow lying crisp and dry on the highway, and it needed all their watchfulness to decipher, by the aid of the starlight, the line of the moorland road. There was no one abroad at that hour. The villagers had been glad to get into their warm homes out of the cold and frosty wind that blew along the white surface of the snow. From over the broad moor there came not the least sound; and the only living thing visible seemed the countless myriads of stars, which shone coldly and clearly through the frosty atmosphere. The Schoolmaster and his companion spoke but little; they were too much engaged in finding the path through the snow.

Suddenly the Tailor stopped and involuntarily laid his hand on his neighbour's arm.

"What is it?" said the Schoolmaster, with a start.

But he had scarcely uttered the words when he saw what had caused his companion to stand still, with his face looking over the moor. Before them —a dark mass in the starlight—stood Airlie Church, and at one end of it—that farthest from the door —the windows seemed to be lighted up with a dull red glow.

"Wha can be in the kirk at this time o' night?" said the Schoolmaster, forgetting to choose proper English phrases.

The Tailor said nothing. He was thinking of Alloway Kirk and the wild revels that had been celebrated there. His talk about the superstitions of the vulgar had gone from his memory; he only saw before him, over a waste of snow and under a starlit sky, a church which could, for no possible reason, be occupied, but which had its windows touched from the inside with a glow of light.

"Man and boy," said the Schoolmaster, "I have lived in Airlie these twenty years, and never saw the like. It is a fearsome licht that. It would be our duty to go and see what it means——"

"There I dinna agree wi' ye!" said the Tailor, quite fiercely. "What business is it o' ours? Folks dinna sweeten their ain yill by meddlin' wi' other

folk's barrels. I am for lettin' the kirk alane. Doubtless it is lichted up for some purpose. Why, dinna ye ken that the Minister's niece was brought up as a Roman; and that the Catholics like to hae a' mainner o' mysterious services in the dead o' nicht?"

This explanation seemed to afford the Tailor very great relief. He insisted upon it even to the point of losing his temper. What right had the Schoolmaster to interfere with other people's religion? Why didn't he do as he would be done by?

"But we ought to see what it is," said the Schoolmaster.

"Ye may gang if ye like," said the Tailor, firmly. "Deil the bit o' me 'll steer!"

The Schoolmaster drew back. He was not going to cross the moor alone—especially with those rumours of mysterious footprints about.

"Perhaps ye are right, Mr. Cruikshanks," he said. "But we maun gang on and tell the Minister."

"Surely, surely," said the Tailor, with eagerness. "We hae a sacred duty to perform. We maun get lights to see our way, and the keys o' the kirk, and the Minister and Andrew Bogue will come wi' us. The notion o' its being witches—ha! ha!—it is quite rideeklous. Such superstitions, sir, have

power wi' the vulgar, but wi' men like you and me, Mr. Gillespie, wha have studied such things, and appeal to the licht o' reason, it is not for us to give way to idle fears. No; we will go up to the door o' the kirk, and we will have the maitter explained on rationalistic principles——"

"I wish, Mr. Cruikshanks," said the Schoolmaster, with a sort of nervous anxiety and anger, "ye wouldna talk and talk about your rationalism and your rationalistic principles. I declare, to hear ye, ane would think there wasna a heeven above us."

But the Tailor continued his discourse on the sublime powers of reason, and waxed more and more buoyant and eloquent, until, the two having reached the gate of the Manse, the Tailor turned upon his companion, and with scorn hinted that he, the Schoolmaster, had succumbed to childish fears on seeing the kirk windows lit up.

"What more simple," said the Tailor, in his grandest manner, "than to have walked up to the door, gone in, and demanded to know what was the reason o' the licht? That is what common sense and reason would dictate; but when fears and superstitions rise and dethrone the monarch from his state, the lord of all is but a trumpery vassal, the meanest at his gate."

The Schoolmaster was too indignant—and perhaps too much relieved on finding himself within the shelter of the Manse wall—to reply. The two neighbours walked up to the door of the Manse—looking rather suspiciously at the gloomy corners around them, and the black shadows of the trees—and knocked. The door was opened half an inch.

"Who's there?" said Leezibeth.

"Me," said the Schoolmaster.

"Who's me?" said the voice from within—the door being still kept on the point of shutting.

"Bless my life and body!" cried the Schoolmaster, provoked out of all patience, "is this a night to keep a human being starving in the snaw? Let us in, woman!"

With which he drove the door before him and entered the passage, confronting the terrified Leezibeth, who dropped her candle there and then, and left the place in darkness.

The Minister opened the parlour-door, and the light streamed out on the strangers. Without being asked, the Schoolmaster and the Tailor stumbled into the room, and stood, with eyes dazed by the light, alternately looking at the Minister and at Coquette, who lay on the sofa with an open book beside her.

"What is the matter? what is the matter?" said the Minister; for both the men seemed speechless with fear.

"Has she no been at the kirk the nicht?" said the Tailor.

"Who?" said the Minister, beginning to think that both of his visitors must be drunk.

"Her," said the Tailor—"your niece, sir—Miss Cassilis."

"At the kirk? She has not been out of the house for months."

"But—but—but there is somebody in the kirk at this present meenute," said the Tailor, breathlessly.

"Nonsense!" said the Minister, with some impatience. "What do you mean?"

"As sure as daith, sir, the kirk's in a lowe!" blurted out the Tailor again, though he still kept his eyes glaring in a fascinated way on Coquette.

To tell the truth, Coquette began to laugh. The appearance and talk of the two strangers—whether the result of drink or of fright—were altogether so abnormal and ludicrous that, for the life of her, she could not keep from smiling. Unfortunately, this conduct on her part, occurring at such a moment, seemed to confirm the suspicions of the two men. They regarded her as if she were a witch

who had been playing pranks with them on the moor, had whipped herself home, and was now mocking them. Vague recollections of "Tam o' Shanter" filled their minds with forebodings. Who knew but that she was connected with these mysterious things of which the village had been talking? Why should the stories have centred upon the Manse? Was she not a Roman, and a foreigner —a creature whose dark eyes were full of concealed meaning—of malicious mischief—of unholy laughter? No wonder there were strange footprints about, or that the kirk was "in a lowe" at midnight.

The Minister abruptly recalled them from their dazed and nervous speculations by demanding to know what they had seen. Together they managed to produce the story in full; and the Minister said he would himself at once go over the moor to the kirk.

"Micht not Andrew Bogue come wi' a lantern?" said the Tailor; and the Minister at once assented.

With that, the spirits of the two heroes rose. They would inquire into this matter. They would have no devilish cantrips going on in the parish, if they could help it. And so they once more sallied out into the cold night air, and, with much loud talking and confident suggestion, struck across the snow of the moor.

As they drew near to the small church the talking died down. The red light was clearly seen in the windows. Andrew Bogue, who had been a few steps ahead of the party, in order to show them the way, suggested that he should fall behind, so that the light would shine more clearly around their feet. Against this both the Schoolmaster and the Tailor strongly protested; and the discussion ended by the Minister impatiently taking the lamp into his own hand and going forward. The *posse comitatus* followed close, and in deep silence. Indeed, there was not a sound heard, save the soft yielding of the crisp snow; and in the awful stillness—under the great canopy of sparkling stars—the red windows of the small and dark building glimmered in front of them.

The Minister walked up to the door, the others keeping close behind him. He endeavoured to open it; it was locked.

"The keys, Andrew," he said.

"I—I—I dinna bring any keys," said Andrew, testily. He was angry with his tongue for stammering, and with his throat for choking.

"And how did ye expect us to get in?" said the Minister.

"Why, I thocht—I thocht that if there was any-

body in the kirk, the door would be open," said Andrew, in a querulous whisper.

"Go back to the Manse and get them," said the Minister, perhaps with concealed irony.

"By mysel'?" said Andrew. "Across the moor by mysel'? What for does any human being want to get into the kirk? Doubtless there are some bits o' wanderin' bodies inside; would ye turn them out in the cauld? If ye do want to look into the kirk, there is a ladder 'at ye can pit against the wa'."

Andrew was ordered to bring the ladder; but he professed his inability to carry it. The Schoolmaster and the Tailor went with him to a nook behind some back-door, and presently reappeared —walking stealthily and conversing in whispers— with the ladder, which they placed against the wall. The Schoolmaster, with a splendid assumption of bravery, clambered up the steps, and paused when the tip of his nose received the light from the panes. The others awaited his report breathlessly.

"I canna see anything," he whispered, coming down rather rapidly.

But where the Schoolmaster had gone, the Tailor would go. Mr. Cruickshanks went bravely up the ladder, and peered in at the window. What could be the meaning of this ghastly stillness, and the yellow light burning somewhere in the church? He

had heard of awful scenes, in which corpse-lights had come forth all over a churchyard, and vague forms flitted about, in the midst of peals of demoniac laughter. But here was no sound—no movement—only the still glare of a ruddy light, coming from whence he knew not.

But what was that echoed along the empty church? The Tailor grasped the top rung of the ladder. He would have given worlds to have got down, but if he had let go, his trembling legs would have thrown him backward. Something was moving in the dim and solitary church—his breath came and went—his head swam round—the ladder trembled with his grasp. Suddenly there was a startling cry, an awful and appalling shriek from the Schoolmaster, as he turned to find, in the darkness, a figure approaching him. Andrew fell back from the foot of the ladder; and the next moment down came the ladder and the Tailor together with a crash upon Andrew and his lamp, burying the one in the snow, and smashing the other to pieces. A succession of piercing cries from the Tailor broke the silence of the moor; until the Minister, dragging him out of the snow, bade him cease his howling. The Schoolmaster had abruptly retreated; until the group of explorers, partly on the ground and partly upright, was approached by this dusky figure.

"What is that?" said the Schoolmaster, in an agonised whisper. "Oh, what is't?—what is't? What can it be, sir? Speak till't!"

The Minister having put the Tailor on his legs —though they were scarcely able to support him— turned to the new comer, and said—

"Well, who are you?"

"Me, sir? Me?" said a deep bass voice, in rather an injured tone, "I'm Tammas Kilpaitrick."

"What! Kilpaitrick the joiner?" said the Schoolmaster.

"Well, I hope sae," said the man, "and I dinna ken what for ye should run away frae a man as though he was a warlock."

"But how came ye in the kirk at this time o' night?" said the Minister.

"Deed, ye may well ask," said the worthy joiner, "for it's little my maister allows me for overtime; and if he will put me to jobs like this after my day's work is done, I hope he'll gie me some fire and better company than a wheen rats and mice. Will Mr. Bogue take hame the keys that my maister got frae his wife this afternoon?"

But Mr. Bogue was still in the snow, groaning. When they picked him up they found the lantern had severely cut his nose, which was bleeding freely. Whereupon the Schoolmaster waxed valiant,

and vouchsafed to the joiner an explanation of the panic, which, he said, was the work "o' that poor body, the Tailor. And, mark me, Mr. Kilpaitrick," he added, "it is not every man that would have insisted on seeing to the bottom o' this maitter, as I did this night. It was our duty to investigate—or, as I might say, to examine—into what might have raised superstitious fears in Airlie, especially as regards the stories that have been about. It shames me that, as we were proceeding in a lawful —or, I might say, legitimate—manner, to inquire, that poor body, the Tailor, should have set up an eldritch screech, as if he was possessed. He is a poor body, that Tailor, and subject to the fears of the vulgar. If ye hear the neighbours talk o' this night's doings, ye will be able, Mr. Kilpaitrick, to say who behaved themselves like men; and I'm thinking that we will be glad o' your company across the moor, and ye will then come in and hae a glass o' toddy wi' us, Mr. Kilpaitrick. As for the Tailor there, the poor craytur has scarcely come to his senses yet; but we maun take him safe hame."

CHAPTER VI.

In the Springtime.

WHY was there no mention of Lord Earlshope in the letters from Airlie which reached the Whaup in his Glasgow lodgings? The Whaup was too proud to ask; but he many a time wondered whether Lord Earlshope was now paying visits to the Manse, as in the bygone time, and watching the progress of Coquette's restoration to health. Indeed, the letters that came up from the moorland village were filled with nothing but Coquette, and Coquette, and Coquette. The boys now openly called her by this familiar name; and her sayings and doings, the presents she made them, and the presents she promised to give them when she should go to Glasgow, occupied their correspondence almost to the exclusion of stories of snow-battles with the lads of the village.

At last the Whaup wrote and asked what Lord Earlshope was doing.

The reply came that he had not been in Airlie since the previous autumn.

"Why, he must be mad?" said the Whaup to himself. "Not go on to his own house, when he was within two or three miles of it! These French novels have turned his head; we shall have him presently figuring as the hero of a fine bigamy case, or poisoning himself with charcoal fumes, or doing something equally French. Perhaps he has done something desperate in his youth, and now reads French novels to see what they have to say on the subject."

Among other intelligence sent him by his correspondents during the winter was that on the morning of New Year's Day (Coquette had been astonished to find that Christmas was held of no account in Airlie) there had arrived at the Manse, directed to that young lady, a large and magnificent volume of water-colour sketches of the Loire. The grandeur of this book—its binding and its contents—was all a wonder at the Manse; and the youngest of the Whaup's brothers expressed his admiration in these terms:

"It is most wonderful. The boards is made of tortis-shell, with white saytin and wreaths of silk roses and flowers in different colours all round it. There is a back of scaurlet marrocca leather, with gilt. And she put it on the table, and when she began to turn it over she laughed, and clapped her

hands thegither, and was fair daft with looking at it; but, as she went on, she stopped, and we all saw that she was greetin. I suppose it was some place she kenned."

No one knew definitely who had sent this gorgeous book—not even Coquette herself; but the popular opinion of the Manse settled that it must have been Lady Drum. There were only two people, widely apart, who had another suspicion in the matter, and these two were Coquette and the Whaup. Meanwhile, if the book had come from Lord Earlshope, it was accompanied by no sign or token from him; and, indeed, his name was now scarcely ever mentioned in the Manse.

And so the long and hard winter passed away: and there came at last a new light into the air, and soft and thawing winds from over the sea. The spring had arrived, with its warm and sweet breezes; and over all the countryside there began to peep out tiny buds of brown and green, with here and there, in many a secret nook and corner, the wonder of a flower. And at last, too, Coquette got out of the house, and began to drink in new life from the mild breezes and the clear blue-white air. Her eyes were perhaps a trifle wistful or even sad when she first got abroad again; for the springtime revives many memories, and is not always a glad season;

but in a little while the stirring of new health and blood in Coquette's pale cheeks began to recall her to her usual spirits. The forenoon was her principal time for going out; and, as the boys were then at Mr. Gillespie's school, she learned to wander about alone, discovering all manner of secret dells about the woods where the wild flowers were sure to be found. Many and many a day she came home laden with hyacinths, and violets, and anemones, and the white stars of the stitchwort; and she brought home, too, a far more valuable and beautiful flower in the bloom which every one saw gathering on her cheek. Sometimes she prevailed on her uncle to accompany her; and she would take the old man's arm and lead him into strange woodland places of which he had but little knowledge. Leezibeth was so delighted to see the girl become her former self, that she was more than usually pugnacious towards Andrew, as if that worthy but sour-tempered man had been harbouring dark projects against the girl's health. Leezibeth, indeed, had wholly gone over to the enemy; and Andrew sadly shook his head and comforted himself with prophecies of evil and lamentation.

One day Coquette had wandered down to the very wood in which the Whaup had caught Neil Lamont poaching. She had been exceptionally lucky

in her quest for new flowers; and had got up a quite respectable bouquet for the study mantel-piece. Then she had that morning received from France a little song of Gounod's, which was abundantly popular there at the time. So, out of mere lightness of heart, she came walking through the wood, and sang to herself carelessly as she went—

La voile ouvre son aile
La brise va souffler—er—er—er—,

when suddenly her voice died down. Who was that coming along the road in the direction of Airlie? A faintness came over her—she caught hold of a branch of a fir—and then with a half instinctive fear she drew back within the shelter of a few tall stems. It was Lord Earlshope who was passing along the road—walking slowly and idly—and apparently taking no notice of the objects around him.

Her heart beat quickly, and her whole frame trembled, as she remained cowering until even the sound of his footsteps had died away. Then she stole out of the wood, and hurriedly followed a circuitous route which landed her breathless, and yet thankful, within the safety of the Manse. He had not observed her.

But he was in the neighbourhood. He had returned from abroad. Perhaps he would go away again without even seeing her and speaking to her

for a moment—unless, indeed, she happened to be out the next forenoon and meet him?

"You must not fall back into any of your dull moods, Catherine," said the Minister, in a cheerful way, to her that evening, as he happened to perceive her unwonted silence, and the pensive look of her eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

Over the Moor.

COQUETTE'S sleep that night was full of dreams of a meeting with Lord Earlshope; and in the morning she awoke with a confused sense of having been wandering with him in a strange land, which had a sombre sky over it, and all around it the moaning of the sea. She seemed to have a notion that the place was familiar to her; and gradually out of her memory she was able to recall the features of a certain gloomy bay, overshadowed by tall mountains.

"I will remember no more of it," she said to herself, dreamily. "That island—is it always coming back?"

Yet those dreams left a troubled impression behind them; and she began to think with some foreboding and fear of a possible meeting with Lord Earlshope if she went out for her accustomed walk. Dared she meet him? Or what if he were here only for a brief time, and went away without a

word? As she calculated anxiously the probabilities of his going, and tried to decide whether she should avoid meeting him, a great dash of rain smote on the windows of the Manse, a glimmer of morning sunlight also struck the panes, and a blustering April wind blew about the chimneys.

"Rain!" she cried, as though she was glad of anything to resolve her anxious doubts. "Then I do not go!"

She got up and dressed quickly. There were no blinds needed for the small windows that looked across the moor. During the progress of her toilette she could see the wild glare of the spring sunshine that chased the rapid and riven clouds which the wind was blowing over the sea. On they came in thunderous masses and filmy streaks—here dark and rainy, there struck into silver by the sunlight; while from time to time there was a period of threatening gloom, followed by the heavy pattering of a shower on the window and slates, and then the wild yellow light again shining out on the dripping trees, on the wet moor, and on the far blue plain that lay around Arran.

"You are in much better spirits this morning," said the Minister at breakfast, after Coquette had been lecturing the boys in a very grand and mock-heroic fashion.

"Yes, in spite of your abominating weather," she replied. "Last night, still and clear—this morning a hurricane! Why is your weather so wild, and your Scotch people so quiet? They are not stormy —no bad temper—no fits of passion—all smooth, and serious, and solemn, as if they did go to a churchyard."

"And that is where we all of us are going, whether in Scotland or France," said the Minister, with a serious smile.

"Yet why always think of it?" said Coquette, lightly. "Why you make the road to the churchyard a churchyard also? No—it is not reasonable. We shall be pleasant, and amuse ourselves in the meantime. Ah! now do look at the faces of all those boys; do they think me wicked?"

Indeed, the row of solemn and awe-struck faces which listened to Coquette's Sadduceeism provoked her into a fit of laughter, which Leezibeth checked by coming into the room and asking abruptly if more tea were wanted.

Coquette had apparently forgot that she had been troubled that morning about Lord Earlshope. The boisterous weather had prevented her going out, so that no choice remained to her. But when after the boys had been despatched to school, she was left to herself and her solitary employment at

the piano, her vivacity of the morning died away. Without any intention she wandered into melancholy strains, and played half-forgotten ballad-airs which she had heard among the peasantry of Morbihan. She began to cast wistful glances towards the windows and the changeable landscape outside. At last she gave up the piano, and went to one of the windows and took a seat there. The intervals of sunlight were growing larger. The clouds seemed more light and fleecy. There was a grey mist of rain down in the south, over Ayr; but all around her the wet landscape was shining in its young spring greens and blues, and the gusty west-wind 'blowing a warm and moist fragrance about the garden, could not quite drown the music of the thrushes and blackbirds. The sky cleared more and more. Even in the south, the rain mist lifted, and the sunlight played round the far promontory. Finally, the wind died down; and over all the land there seemed to reign the fresh clear brightness and sweetness of an April morning.

Coquette put on her small hat (with its dash of sea-bird plumage) and a warm grey woollen shawl, and went out. Her light foot was not heard leaving the house; and in a few minutes she was out on the moorland road—all around her the shining beauty of the spring day, and the glistening of the

recent rain. At another time she would have rejoiced in the clear sunshine and the genial warmth of the western breezes: to-day she seemed thoughtful and apprehensive, and dared scarcely look over the moor. She wandered on—her head somewhat downcast—and when she paused, it was merely to pick up some tiny flower from amongst the wet grass. It was only by a sort of instinct that she avoided the red pools which the rain had left in the road; she seemed to walk on—in the opposite direction from Airlie—as if she were in a dream.

She became aware that there was some one crossing over the moor on her right; still she did not look up. Indeed, before she could collect herself to consider how she should speak to Lord Earlshope, supposing he were to meet her, the stranger had overtaken her, and pronounced her name.

She turned—a trifle pale, perhaps, but quite self-possessed—and regarded him for one brief second. Then she stepped forward and offered him her hand. During that instant he, too, regarded her, in a somewhat strange way, before meeting her advances; and then he said—

"Have you really forgiven me?"

"That is all over," she said, in a low but quite distinct voice—"all over and forgotten. It does do no good to bring it back. You—have you been very well?"

He looked at her again, with something of wonder in the admiration visible in his eyes.

"How very good you are! I have been wandering all over Europe, feeling as though I had the brand of Cain on my forehead. I come back to hear that you have been dangerously ill, without my having any knowledge of it. I hang about, trying to get a word of explanation said to you personally before calling at the Manse, and now you come forward, in your old straightforward way, as if nothing had happened, and you offer me your hand just as if I were your friend."

"Are you not my friend?"

"I do not deserve to be anybody's friend."

"That is nonsense," said Coquette. "Your talk of Cain—your going away—your fears—I do not understand it at all."

"No," said he. "Nor would you ever understand how much I have to claim forgiveness for without a series of explanations which I shall make to you some day. I have not the courage to do it now. I should run the risk of forfeiting the right ever to speak another word to you."

Coquette drew back, and regarded him steadfastly.

"There," said he, "didn't I tell you what would happen? You are becoming afraid of me. You have no reason."

"I believe you," she said; "but I do not understand why all this secrecy—all this mystery. It is very strange to me—all your actions; and you should be more frank, and believe I will not make bad interpretation. You wish to be my friend? I am well pleased of that—but why you make so many secrets?"

"I cannot tell you now," he said, hurriedly. "I am too anxious to believe that you have forgiven me for what happened on that hideous night. I was mad—I was beside myself—I don't know what possession I laboured under to make a proposal—"

"Ah, why bring it all back?" said Coquette. "Is it not better to forget it? Let us be as we were before we went away in the yacht. You shall meet me. I shall speak to you as usual. We shall forget these old misfortunes. You will come to the Manse sometimes—as you did before. You must believe me, it will be very simple and natural if you do try; and you shall find yourself able to be very good friends with all of us, and no more brands of Cain on your forehead."

He saw in her soft eyes that she faithfully meant what she said; and then, with a sort of effort, he said—

"Come, let us walk along, and I will talk to you as you go. There is a path along here by which you can cross the moor, and get back to the Manse by Hechton Mains."

How glad she was to walk by his side in this fashion! It was so pleasant to hear his voice, and to know that the grave kindliness of his eyes sometimes met hers, that she did not stop to ask whether it was merely as friends they were walking together. Nor did she notice, so glad was she, how constrained was his talk; how he was sometimes, in moments of deep silence, regarding her face with a look which had the blackness of despair in it. She chatted on, pleased and happy; breaking imperiously away from all mention of what had happened in the North whenever that became imminent. She did not even perceive where she was going; she submitted to be led, and even lost sight of the familiar features of the landscape surrounding her own home.

"I wonder if there was ever a woman as unselfish as you are," he said, abruptly and morosely. "I know that you are pretending to be glad only to

make our meeting pleasant and spare me the pain of self-accusation."

"How can you think such morbid things on such a beautiful morning?" she asked. "Is it not a pleasure to be in the open air? Is it not a pleasure to meet an old friend? And yet you stop to pull it all to pieces, and ask why, and what, and how. You—who have been abroad—are not thankful for this bit of sunshine—perhaps that is the reason."

"There is something almost angelic—if we knew anything about angels—in the way you have of forgetting yourself in order to make other people feel at ease."

"And if you are not cheerful this morning, you have not forgotten how to pay compliments," she said, with a smile.

Presently he said, with a shrug—

"You must consider me a very discontented fellow, I fancy. You see, I don't wish just at present to interrupt our new friendliness by explaining why I am not cheerful—why I owe you more contrition than you can understand—why your kindness almost makes me suspicious of your good faith. You don't know——"

"I know enough," she said, with a pretty gesture of impatience. "I wish not to have any more whys, and whys, and whys. Explanations, they never do good

between friends. I am satisfied of it if you come to the Manse, and become as you were once. That is all—that is sufficient. But just now—when you have the pleasant morning before you—it is not good to torment yourself by doubts, and suspicions, and questions."

"Ah, well," he said, "I suppose I must suffer you to consider me discontented without cause. It will be of little consequence a hundred years hence."

Coquette laughed.

"Even in your resignation you are gloomy. Why you say that about a hundred years? I do not care what happens in a hundred years: but just now, while we are alive, we ought to make life pleasant to each other, and be as comfortable as we can."

So they wandered on, Coquette not paying particular heed to the direction of their walk. Her companion was not very talkative; but she was grateful for the new interest that had been lent to her life by his arrival at Airlie, and was in very good spirits. All her fears of the morning had vanished. It seemed a comparatively easy thing for her to meet him; there could apparently be no recurrence of the terrible scene which was now as a sort of dream to her. Suddenly, however, her

companion paused; and she, looking up, saw that they were now at the corner of the Earlshope grounds, where these joined the moor. There was a small gate in the wall fronting them.

"Will you come into the grounds," he said, producing a small key; "you need not go up to the house. There is a sort of grotto, or cavern, which I had constructed when I was a lad, at this end of the copse. Will you go in and see it?"

Coquette hesitated only for a moment, and then she said—"Yes." He opened the small gate; they both passed through; and Coquette found herself at the extremity of a small path leading through a stripe of fir wood.

CHAPTER VIII.

Lord Earlshope's Cave.

SHE now recollected that long ago the Whaup had spoken of some mysterious place which Lord Earlshope had built within his grounds; and when her companion, begging her to excuse him for a few minutes, passed into what was apparently a cleft in a solid mass of earth or rock, and when she heard the striking of a match, she concluded that he was lighting up the small theatrical scene for her benefit. Nor was she mistaken, for presently he came out and asked her to return with him through this narrow aperture. He led the way; she followed. If the cavern into which they entered were of artificial construction, considerable pains had been taken to make it look natural. At first the cleft was open above, and the sides of the passage were covered with ferns and weeds growing in considerable profusion. By-and-by she came in front of a large recess, apparently dug out of the side of a rock, and involuntarily a cry of wonder escaped

her. The sides of this tolerably spacious cave were studded here and there by curiously shaped and pendent lamps of various colours; and right at the back was a Chinese stove, on the polished surface of which the coloured lights threw faint reflections. Down one side of the cave a stream trickled; dropping over bits of rock, and wetting the masses of fern which grew in their clefts. The space in front of the stove was perfectly dry; and there stood two cane easy-chairs, fitted with small reading desks, and candles. The whole place looked a bit cut out of a pantomime; and Coquette, suddenly finding herself in this strange place, with its dusky corners and its coloured lamps, wholly forgot that outside there reigned the brightness of a spring day.

"What do you think of my boyish notions of the marvellous?" he said, with a smile.

"It is wonderful," said Coquette, who fancied she had been transferred to a fairy palace.

"There are incongruities in it," said he, "for I changed my hobbies then as rapidly as now. It was begun in imitation of a cavern I had read of in a novel; it was continued as a mandarin's palace, and finally finished up in imitation of the Arabian Nights. But you can imagine it to be what you like, once you have taken off your boots, which

must be damp, and put on that pair of Russian slippers which you will find in front of the stove. I shall leave you to complete your toilette, while I go up to the house for some biscuits and wine."

With which he left, before Coquette could utter a word of protest. She now found herself alone in this extraordinary place. Had he brought her there intentionally? She had looked at the slippers—they were lady's slippers, and new. He had evidently, then, anticipated that he would meet her, walk with her, and bring her thither. She knew not what to do. Yet the slippers were very pretty—curiously wrought with coloured beads, and deeply furred all round. They were seductively warm, too, from having been lying before the stove. So, with a certain defiant air, she sat down, pulled off her tiny boots, and placed them before the stove; and presently her small feet were encased in the warm and furred slippers, which had apparently been left for her by the genii of the cave.

Then she sat down in one of the easy-chairs, pulled off her gloves, and put out just so much of the slippers that she could admire their rose-coloured tips. All this conduct on her part she knew to be dreadfully and desperately wrong; but she was very comfortable, and the place was very pretty. As for the slippers, they were simply not to be refused.

Indeed, the whole thing hovered in her mind as half a dream and half a joke; and when, at length, Lord Earlshope appeared with his stock of provisions, the whole adventure looked remarkably like one of those playing-at-houses games familiar to children. As for any apprehension of her indiscreet behaviour being a subject of after annoyance, she felt none whatever. Had not Lord Earlshope and herself quite got back to their old friendly terms; and what harm was there in her joining in this piece of amusement? If she had any doubts or misgivings, they were swallowed up in the sensation of comfort lent by the Russian slippers.

Coquette ate one or two of the small biscuits, and drank half a glass of the yellow-white wine, which Lord Earlshope poured out for her. Then she said—

"I do not know how you can go away from this place. I should live here always. Why did you go away?"

"I am going away again," he said. She looked up with some surprise—perhaps with a shadow of disappointment, too, on her face.

"How can I stay here?" he said, suddenly. "I should be meeting you constantly. I have no right to meet you. I am satisfied, now that I know you are well, and that you have forgiven me; and I do

not wish to repeat a bygone error. You—who are always so pleased with everything around you—I see you have forgotten that witchery that seemed to have fallen over us both last summer. You are again yourself—calm, satisfied with yourself—on excellent terms with everybody and everything. But I have not been cured by my few months' absence. Now that I see you again——. Bah! what is the use of annoying you by such talk? Tell me, how is your cousin in Glasgow?"

Coquette remained quite silent and thoughtful, however, with her eyes fixed on the stove before her. After a little while, she said—

"I have not forgotten—I will never forget. I have been so pleased to see you this morning that perhaps I have appeared light—fickle—what you call it?—in your eyes, and not mindful of your trouble. It is not so. I do remember all that happened; it is only I think it better not to bring it back. Why you should go away? If you remain, we shall learn to meet as friends, as we are now, are we not?"

"Do you think that is possible?" he asked, gravely looking at her.

Coquette dropped her eyes; and said, in a low voice—

"It may be difficult just a little while; yet it is

possible. And it seems hard that if we do enjoy the meeting with each other, we must not meet—that I drive you away from your own home."

"It is odd—is it not?" he said, in rather an absent way. "You have made me an exile, or, rather, my own folly has done that. No, Coquette; I am afraid there is no compromise possible—for me, at least—until after a few years, and then I may come back to talk to you in quite an off-hand fashion, and treat you as if you were my own sister. For I am a good deal older than you, you know——"

At this moment there was a sound of footsteps outside; and Coquette hurriedly sprang to her feet. Lord Earlshope immediately went out to the entrance of the place; and Coquette heard some one approach from the outside. She hastily abandoned her small furred slippers, and drew on her damp boots; then she stood, with a beating heart, listening.

"I am sorry to have alarmed you," said Lord Earlshope, returning. "It was only a servant with some letters which have arrived."

But the sound of those footsteps had suddenly awakened Coquette to a sense of the imprudence, and even danger, of her present position, and she

declined to resume her comfortable seat before the fire.

"I must go," she said.

"Let me show you the way," said he; and so he led her out the winding path, and through the shrubbery to the small gate that opened out of the moor. She had reached the limit of Earlshope; in front of her stretched the undulating plain leading up to Airlie; she was free to go when she pleased.

"I must not see you home," he said, "or the good people who may have noticed us an hour ago would have a story to tell."

"I shall find my way without trouble," said Coquette, and she held out her hand.

"Is it to be good-bye, then?" he said, looking sadly at her.

"Not unless you please," said Coquette, simply, although she bent her eyes on the ground. "I should like you to remain here, and be friends with us as in long ago; it is not much to ask; it would be a pleasure to me, and I should be sorry and angry with myself if I thought you had again gone away because of me. It is surely no reason you should go; for I should think of you far away, and think that I ought to go away, not you, for I am a stranger come to Airlie, and sometimes I think I have come only to do harm to all my friends——"

"My darling!" he said, with a strange and sad look on his face, as he caught her to him, and looked down into the clear, frightened eyes, "you shall not accuse yourself like this. If there is blame in my staying I will bear it—I will stay, whatever happens—and we shall meet, Coquette, shall we not, even as now, in this stillness, with no one to interrupt our talk? Why do you look frightened, Coquette? Are you afraid of me? See, you are free to go!"

And his arms released their hold, and she stood, with downcast eyes, alone and trembling. But she did not move. And so, once again, he drew her towards him, and, ere she knew, his arms were around her, and she was close against his bosom, and kisses were being showered on her forehead and on her lips. It was all so sudden, so wild and strange, that she did not stir, nor was she but half-conscious of the fetters of iron which these few moments were fastening down on her life. It was very terrible, this crisis; but she vaguely felt that there was the sweetness of despair and utter abandonment possessing her; that the die had been cast for good or evil, and the old days of doubt and anxiety were over.

"Let me go—let me go!" she pleaded, piteously. "Oh, what have we done?"

"We have sealed our fate," said he, with a wild look in his eyes, which she did not see. "I have fought against this for many a day—how bitterly and anxiously no one knows, Coquette. But now, Coquette, but now—won't you look up and let me see that love is written in your eyes? Won't you look up, and give me one kiss before we part?—only one, Coquette?"

But her downcast face was pale and deathlike, and for a moment or two she seemed to tremble. Finally she said—

"I cannot speak to you now. To-morrow or next day—perhaps we shall meet. *Adieu!*—you must leave me to go alone."

And so she went away over the moor; and he stood looking after her for some time, with eyes that had now lost all their wild joy and triumph, and were wistful and sad.

"She does not know what has happened to her to-day," he said to himself, "and I—I have foreseen it, and striven to guard against it—to no purpose."

CHAPTER IX.

The Nemesis of Love.

"At last—at last—at last!" The words rung in her ears as she hurried across the moor—seeing nothing—heeding nothing—her face turned away from the clear blue-white of the spring sky. She was only anxious to get within the shelter of her own home, to resolve those wild doubts and fears which were pressing upon her. In many and many a story of her youth—in many a ballad and song she had sung long ago in the garden overlooking the Loire—she had heard tell of happy lovers and their joy; and, with the light fancies of a girl, she had looked forward to the time when she, too, might awake to find her life crowned by those sweet experiences that fall to the lot of young men and maidens. Was this love that had come to her at last—not in the guise of an angel, with a halo over his head and mildness in his face, but in the guise of a sorcerer, who had the power to turn the very sunlight into blackness?

Yet, when she had reached the solitude of her own chamber, she asked herself the reason of this sudden fear. What made her heart beat and her cheek grow pale as she looked back to that wild evening in Loch Scavaig? Was not that all over and gone—forgotten and buried in the past? Indeed, she began to reason with herself over the injustice of recalling it. Had not Lord Earlshope sufficiently endeavoured to atone for—what?

That was the mystery which was pressing upon her with a terrible pertinacity. She had been oppressed with an unnameable dread during that memorable evening; but what had Lord Earlshope done, beyond talk wildly and almost fiercely for a few minutes? She had almost forgotten the substance of what he had then said. And now that he had expressed his penitence for that—since he had even punished himself with six months' exile on account of it—why should the memory of it interfere between them as a gloomy phantom, voiceless, but yet holding up a warning finger?

"I do not understand it," she murmured to herself in French. "There is something he will not tell me; and yet why should he be afraid? Does he fear that I shall be unjust or merciless—to him who has never a hard word or a suspicion for any one? Why should he not tell me?—it cannot be

anything wrong of himself—or I should see it in his eyes. And whatever it is, it separates us—and I have given my life to a man who seems to stand on the other side of a river from me—and I can only hold out my hands to him, and wish that the river were the river of death, so that I could cross over, and fall at his feet, and kiss them."

She took out a little book of devotions which had been given her by some companions on leaving France, and sat down at the small window-table, and placed it before her. A few moments thereafter, Lady Drum, coming into the room, found the girl's head resting on the table covered by her hands.

"Asleep in the middle o' the day!" said the visitor, who had unceremoniously come up-stairs.

Coquette hastily rose, and would have hidden her face by turning aside, and going into her bedroom, but that Lady Drum stopped her, and took her by both hands.

"What! No rosier than that? And fast asleep in the middle o' such a day! Dear me, lassie!" she added, looking more narrowly at her, "what are your een so big, and wild, and wet for?"

Lady Drum walked to the table, and took up the small book. She turned over its pages, and the contempt visible on her face grew fast and fierce.

"Saints—crosses—mealy-faced women wi' circles round their heads—men in blue gowns wi' a lamb by them—is this the trash ye spend your days ower, when ye should be in the open air?"

Lady Drum clasped the book again, put it in the drawer of the table, and shut the drawer with somewhat unnecessary vehemence.

"Phew! I have no patience wi' the folk that would make every young lassie a nun. Come here, my young princess wi' the pale face, are you no a staunch, earnest, indomitable Presbyterian?"

"I am what you please," said Coquette timidly.

"Are you, or are you not, a Presbyterian?"

"Perhaps I am," said Coquette. "I do not know what it is—this Presby—I do not know what you say. But I do keep my books that belonged to me in France. That is a good book—it can do no harm to any one——"

"My certes! here is a pretty convert! It can do no harm to any one?—and I find ye in the middle o' the day, greetin ower its palaverins, and with a face that would suit a saint better than a brisk young creature o' your age. Ayrshire is no the place for saints—the air is ower healthy. Come here, and I will show ye the book that ye must read."

She led Coquette to the window, and began to

expatiate on the enjoyments of being out walking on such a day—with the spring winds stirring the young corn, and ruffling the distant blue of the sea. Alas! all that Coquette saw was the beginning of the line of trees that led down to Earlshope.

"Listen now," said Lady Drum, "I have come here on an errand. Ye have never seen Glasgow. I am going up to-morrow morning; can you come wi' me—stay two or three weeks—and cheer your cousin's exile a bit?"

Coquette's conscience smote her hard; and it was with a quick feeling of pain and remorse that she thought of the Whaup. She had almost forgotten him. Far away in the great city of which she knew so little, he was working hard, buoyed up by some foolish and fond notion that he was pleasing her. All at once her heart turned towards him with a great affection and yearning. She would make amends for the wrong which he had unwittingly suffered. She would go at once to Glasgow; and would shower upon him every token of solicitude and kindness that she could devise.

"Oh, yes, Lady Drum!" she said, with evident eagerness in her face. "I will go with you as soon as you please. Have you seen my cousin? Is he well? Is he tired of his hard work? Does he speak

of us sometimes? He does not think we have forgotten him?"

"Hoity toity! Twenty questions in a breath! Let me tell you this, my young lady, that your cousin, though he says nothing, is doing wonders; and that Dr. Menzies, to whom the Minister confided him, is fair delighted wi' him, and has him at denner or supper twice or thrice a week; and your cousin is just petted extraordinar by the young leddies o' the house, and bonnier lassies there are none in Glasgow."

Coquette clasped her hands.

"Perhaps he will marry one of them," she cried, with a wonderful gladness in her eyes.

Lady Drum looked at her.

"Marry one o' them? Would ye like to see him marry one o' them? Has that daft picture-book turned your head and made ye determined to gang into a nunnery?"

"It is not necessary he marries me," said Coquette in a tone of protest. "A young man must choose his own wife—it is not pleasant for him to be made to marry by his friends."

"Ah, well!" said Lady Drum, with a sigh. "Young folks are young folks, and they will pretend that the marmalade they would like to steal is nothing but downright medicine to them. Ye had

better begin to think about packing up for to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning!" said Coquette, with a sudden tremor of apprehension.

"Yes."

"Oh, I cannot go to-morrow—I cannot go to-morrow: will not the next day do, Lady Drum? May I have not one day more?"

Astonished beyond measure by the sudden alteration in the girl's manner—from delight at the prospect of going to an almost agonising entreaty to be left alone for another day—Lady Drum did not reply for a minute or two, but regarded her companion, who bent her eyes on the ground.

"What have you to do to-morrow?" said the elderly lady, at last.

"It is nothing—it is not much," stammered Coquette. "Only I do wish to remain at Airlie to-morrow. It is only one day longer, Lady Drum."

"Why, you plead as if I were to tak ye out for execution the day after. If it will serve ye, I will wait for another day—and on Friday morning, at ten meenutes to ten, ye maun be at the station, wi' a' your trunks and things in good order."

"But I have not asked my uncle yet," said Coquette.

"I have, though," said Lady Drum, "and I'm

thinking he'll no miss ye except at the breakfast. Since he began to get up that Concordance o' the Psalms, he seems to have withdrawn himself from the world round aboot him, as it were, dead to his friends."

"It is very kind of you to ask me to go with you," said Coquette, suddenly remembering that she had not thanked Lady Drum for her offer.

"Na, na," said her elderly friend, "what would a big house be without a young leddy in it to bring veesitors about? And this time, I maun tell ye, a friend o' Sir Peter's has given us the loan o' his house until he comes back from Rome; and it is a big house overlooking the West End Park; and I'm thinking we'll find it mair comfortable than a hotel, although Sir Peter says he will miss the bar—which is his joke, my lassie, for he is no given to promiscuous fuddlin', as ye may have observed. And we will have some company; and it will no be amiss if ye bring wi' ye such French ornaments or dresses as might be rather out o' place in the Manse o' Airlie. And I am sure ye will be quite surprised to see your cousin—how he looks now just like a fine, stalwart gentleman, instead o' a lang-leggit laddie; and it is just possible Lord Earlshope may pay us a visit some evening."

Did Lady Drum throw out this hint as a vague

feeler? She had never penetrated the mystery which had surrounded the relations between Coquette and Lord Earlshope during their voyage in the Highlands. She had, indeed, destroyed the scrap of writing handed to her by Coquette when the girl was delirious, unwilling to bother herself with a secret which did not concern her. Still, Lady Drum was just a trifle curious. There was something very peculiar and interesting in the odd notions which the young French girl seemed to have acquired about love and marriage. Lady Drum had never met with any one who held but the ordinary and accepted theories on that attractive subject. Yet here was a young lady who calmly contemplated the possibility of loving some one whom circumstances might prevent her marrying; and seemed in no wise disinclined to marry any one whom her friends recommended, and wished to make her husband. Were these French notions of the duty of daughters to their parents? Or had they been picked up in idle speculation, and not yet driven away—as Lady Drum felt certain they would be driven away by a real love affair. At all events, the mention of Lord Earlshope's name at once arrested Coquette's attention.

"Does Lord Earlshope ever go to Glasgow?" she asked, suddenly.

"What for no?"

"And is he likely to meet my cousin at your house?"

"Assuredly. Why not? Why not?"

"I did ask merely to know," said Coquette, with thoughtful eyes.

Then Lady Drum bade her come downstairs and get her a biscuit and a glass of wine. The Minister was brought out of his study, and they had a little talk over Coquette's projected trip. At length, Lady Drum sent to see if her coachman had refreshed his horses; and, finally, with a pleasant "*au revaur, ma feel au revaur! au revaur à bonnair!*" the old lady walked in her grand and stately fashion across the small garden, got into her carriage, and was driven away from Airlie Manse.

There remained to Coquette but one day on which she had the chance of seeing Lord Earlshope, and how was she to bring about a meeting which she half feared, yet could not wholly forego?

CHAPTER X.

The last Day at Airlie.

ALL during that evening, and in thinking of the next morning, she nursed a sweet and strange poison at her heart. Love seemed no longer to be so terrible as on that weird evening in the Highlands; and she grew accustomed to the danger, and glad that, come what might, this flower of life had at length fallen upon her and she knew its fragrance. Had she not been told, in many of those old stories, that love for love's sake was enough? She did not care to count its cost. She scarcely paid any heed as to how it might end. Sufficient to know that now, at this moment, her heart was beating wildly against its prison-bars, and would fain have taken wings and flown over the moor towards Earlshope, if only to die on finding a haven.

Nor was there much disquiet in her look the next morning when she rose and found that another bright and clear day had come to mark her farewell to Airlie. She was hurried and excited,

perhaps, in preparing to go out, but she was joyful, too; and the early morning sunshine, streaming in through the small window, found her eyes full of gladness and hope.

Yet how was she to communicate with Lord Earlshope, and let him know that she wished to say good-bye to him? Clearly, neither her uncle nor Lady Drum knew that he was at Earlshope. She dared not send him a message; and equally impossible was it for her to go up alone to the house. Her hope was that he would be on the look-out for her; and that another stolen interview would mark the last day she had for the present to spend at Airlie.

She was not mistaken in that vague surmise. When she went out for her accustomed forenoon stroll, she had wandered but for a little way when she found him approaching her. His look was anxious; but hers was full of affection and trust.

"You are no longer alarmed to see me?" he asked, with an expression of glad surprise.

"No," she said. "Why should I? Perhaps I ought not to meet you in this way; but it will not be for long. And you—you seem to have dropt from the clouds."

"I was on my way to the Manse."

"To the Manse!" she repeated, in some dismay.

"Yes. Do you know any reason why I should not call upon your uncle? I dared not go near the place until I had assured myself I should not be annoying you. And now I hope to be able to call and see you there, instead of inveigling you into these surreptitious meetings, even although they have the charm of secrecy—and of Russian slippers."

He had caught some faint reflex of cheerfulness from the gladness of her face; but there was still about him a look of constraint and anxiety.

"It is too late to think of that," she said; "I go to Glasgow to-morrow."

"Have they found out? Are they sending you away?" he asked, hurriedly.

"No; there is nothing to find out. But Lady Drum, she is good enough to ask me to go with her; and there I will see my cousin, whom I have promised to visit often, yet have never been able. And I am sorry for him; alone in that great place, and the people here nearly forgetting him. Does he not deserve some reparation, some kindness from me?"

She looked up into his face; and he knew that she meant more than appeared in her words.

"I wonder," said Lord Earlshope, after a little while, "if he does hope to win your love; if he is

working there with the far-off intention of coming back here and asking you to be his wife. If that is so, we have acted very cruelly by him."

"Ah, not cruelly!" she said, as if begging him to reassure her. "If we have forgotten him, can I not make it up to him? You will see, when I go to Glasgow, I will be very kind to him—he will not think that he has been ill-used."

"But he will think that you are still looking favourably on his vague hopes—he will be all the more assured that, some day or other, you will become his wife."

"And if that will make him happy," she said, slowly and with wistful eyes, "there is nothing I will not do to make him happy."

Lord Earlshope regarded her with a strange look.

"You would become his wife?"

"If that only would make him happy—yes. He deserves so much from me—I will do that, if he demands it."

"You will marry him, and make him fancy that you love him?"

"No," she said, simply. "I should tell him everything. I should tell him that he deserves to marry a woman who has never loved any one but himself; and yet that I—if his marrying me will

alone make him happy—I will do what I can, and be his wife."

"So the world goes," said her companion, with a strange bitterness in his tone; "and it is the good, and the true, and the noble that suffer. You are far too unselfish to lead a happy life, Coquette. You will sacrifice yourself, sooner or later, for the sake of some one you love; and the reward you will get will be reprobation and the outcry of the crowd. And I—I have so far paved the way for all this that if I could free you at this moment by laying down my own life, you would find it no vain boast when I say now that I would do it willingly."

"But you have not made me suffer," she said, gently. "Look now and see whether I am sad or miserable. I have been so happy all this morning, merely to think I should see you—that is enough; and now you are here I am content. I wish no more in the world."

"But Coquette—don't you see?—it cannot end here," he said, almost desperately. "You do not know the chains in which I am bound. I—I dare not tell you—and yet, before you go to Glasgow—"

"No," she said, in the same gentle voice. "I do not wish to know. It is enough for me to be

beside you as now—whatever is in store for us. And if it should all be bad and sorrowful, I shall remember that once I was satisfied—that once I walked with you here one morning, and we had no thought of ill, and we were for a little while happy."

"But I cannot stop there," said he. "I must look at the future. Oh, my poor girl, I think it would have been better for us both had we never been born!"

She drew back from him amazed and alarmed. All the grave kindliness of his face had gone, and he was regarding her with a look so full of pity and of love that her heart grew still with a great fear. Why was it that, at the very moment when they were most peaceful and happy—when she merely wished to enjoy the satisfaction of being near him, leaving the future to take care of itself—this unnameable something came in between them, and bade her begone from a man who had something to say which he dared not tell her? Yet that hesitation of hers lasted but a moment. After all, she thought, what was her happiness in comparison with that of the man she loved? She saw the pain and the despair written on his face, and she drew nearer to him again, and took his hand in hers.

"I shall never wish that I had not been born,"

she said, "for I have known you a little while, and I have walked with you here. The rest is nothing. What can harm us, if we are true to ourselves, and do what we think is right?"

"That is possible to you—who are as clear-souled as an angel," he said.

Now what could ail two lovers who were walking thus in the happy spring-time—alone together—with youth in their eyes, and all the world before them? Was it not enough for them to be? All things around them were peaceful in the clear sunlight—the fields lay still and warm in their coating of young green—the birds were busy in the leaves of the hedges, and there was many a jubilant note in the woods. Far away in the south there lay a faint blue smoke over the houses of Ayr, but no murmur of toil and struggle reached them up on those moorland heights. The moor itself, and the fields, and the valleys were as still as the sea, which shone in the sunlight a pale blue until it was lost in the white of the horizon. They only seemed out of consonance with the peace of this mild and clear spring day, in which the world lay and basked.

They strolled on together—Coquette sometimes picking up a flower—until they had got down to

that corner of Earlshope grounds where the small gate was. They had come thither unintentionally.

"Shall we go in?" said her companion.

"No," said Coquette. "It is too beautiful outside to-day. Why cannot we go out yonder on the sea, and sail along the coast of Arran, and on and up Lochfyne, where the still blue lake is? I do remember it was so pleasant there — but afterwards——"

A cloud fell over her face, and Lord Earlshope hastened to change the subject. He spoke of her going to Glasgow; of the chances of his seeing her there; of the time she would be likely to stay. By this time they had turned again, and were walking in the direction of the Manse. Somehow or other, Coquette seemed unwilling to speak of Glasgow, or to admit that she expected to see him at Lady Drum's house. When, indeed, they had come within sight of the house, Coquette stopped, and said she would bid him good-bye there.

"But why are you so sad, Coquette?" he said. "This is no farewell; most likely I shall be in Glasgow before you."

"I am sorry for that," she said, with her eyes fixed on the ground.

"Why now? What subtle notion of self-sacrifice

—for that it must be if you have resolved upon anything—have you adopted now?"

"You do not seem to know what reparation I do owe to my cousin. It is for him I go to Glasgow. You must not come if it will annoy him—the poor boy! who has not much to comfort him except—except——"

"Except the thought of marrying you, Coquette," said Lord Earlshope; "and you—you seem to think nothing of yourself, if only you can secure the happiness of everybody else. Ah, well, if you wish me not to see you while you are in Glasgow, I will remain away. Let your cousin have that brief time of enjoyment. But for us two, Coquette—for us two there is no hope of this separation being final."

"Hope?" she said; "why do you hope it? Is it not pleasant for us to see each other, if only we do no harm or pain to our friends? Why do you speak in that way, as if some great trouble was about to befall us. Sometimes I do fear what you say, and I think of it at night, and I tremble, for I have no one that I can speak to; but in the morning these fears go away, for I look out of the window, and I know you are near Earlshope, and I am only anxious to see you."

"My darling!" he said, with a look of great

compassion and tenderness in his eyes, "you deserve the happiest life that ever a true-hearted woman enjoyed; and when I think what I have done to make you miserable——"

"Ah, not miserable!" she said. "Do I look miserable? You must not think that; nor that I am at all miserable in Glasgow. No, good-bye—good-bye——"

"For how long?" said he, taking both her hands in his.

With that she looked down, and said in a very low voice—

"If you are weary here—you may come to see me in Glasgow—once, twice, but not often——"

The rest of her words were lost, for she found herself once more folded in his arms, as he bade her good-bye, and kissed her.

"Good-bye, Coquette, good-bye!" he said, tenderly; and when she had gone some way across the moor, and turned and saw him still standing there, it seemed to her that she still heard him say "Good-bye." He waved a handkerchief to her; it was as if he were on board a vessel standing out to sea, and that soon a great and desolate ocean would roll between them. When she got home, and went up into her own room, and looked out of the window, there was no figure visible on the

wide expanse of the moor. There was nothing there but the sunshine and the quiet.

This was the first day that Coquette had known the joy of being loved; and lo! it was already empty. Fair and beautiful the morning had been —a day to remain a white stone in her memory— but it was already numbered with the days that were. And the love that filled her heart—it was no gay and happy thing, to make her laugh and sing out of pure delight, but an unrest and a care she was now to carry always with her, wondering whether its sweetness were as great as its pain.

CHAPTER XI.

Coquette in Town.

As Coquette and Lady Drum drew near to Glasgow the impatience of the girl increased. Her thoughts flew on more swiftly than the train, and they were all directed towards the Whaup, whom she was now about to see.

"Will he be at the station? Does he know we are coming? Or shall we see him as we go along the streets?" she asked.

"Dear me!" said Lady Drum, "ye seem to think that Glasgow is no bigger than Saltcoats. Meet him in the streets? We should scarce see him in the streets if he were dressed in scaurlet."

It was growing towards dusk when the two ladies arrived. Lady Drum's carriage was waiting at the station; and presently Coquette found herself in the midst of the roar and turmoil of the great city. The lamps on the bridges were burning yellow in the grey coldness of the twilight; and she caught a glimpse of the masses of shipping down

in the dusky bed of the river. Then up through the busy streets—where the windows were growing bright with gas, and dense crowds of people were hurrying to and fro, and the carts, and waggons, and carriages raised a din that was strange and bewildering to ears grown accustomed to the stillness of Airlie.

"Alas!" said Coquette, "I cannot see him in this crowd—it is impossible."

Lady Drum laughed, and said nothing. And so they drove on—the high, old-fashioned chariot, which ought to have been kept for state purposes down at Castle Cawmil, swinging gently on its big springs—up to the north-western districts of the city. When Coquette was finally set down in front of a range of tall houses, the rooms of which were shining ruddily through crimson curtains, she got up the steps, and turned to take a look at her new place of abode. Lo! in front of her there was no more city; but a great gulf of pale blue mist, with here and there an orange lamp burning in the distance. There were no more streets, nor crowds, nor great waggons; and she even became aware that there were trees in front of her and down there in the mysterious hollow.

"Where am I?" she said. "It is not a town—

are we in the country again? And where is my cousin?"

At this moment the hall door was thrown open by a servant; and out of the blaze of light came a dapper and fat little gentleman, who, with a light laugh, darted down the steps and gave his arm to Coquette.

"Here we are again!" cried Sir Peter. "Charmed to see you, Miss Cassilis—quite charmed; hope you will have many a pleasant evening — many, and many, and many a pleasant evening. H'm, h'm! Ha, ha! Ha, ha!"

Then he was about to hand her over in his airy fashion to the young person who had been told off as her maid; but Miss Coquette was rebellious.

"No," she said. "I do wish to go and see my cousin before anything—he does not know I am in this town—it will be good-natured of you, Sir Peter, to come with me."

"Oh, certainly! certainly! Roberts, stop the carriage! My lady, keep dinner to half-past eight. Come along, my dear. H'm! Ha! Tra-la-la-la!"

Lady Drum stood at the open door, amazed. Indeed, she was so astounded by this mad project on the part of her husband—within an hour of dinner-time—that she had not a word to say, and

in blank astonishment she beheld the carriage drive off. Once more Coquette found herself getting into a labyrinth of streets, and the farther they drove the more noisy and dingy they seemed to get. She began to wonder if it was in this place that the Whaup had been living for so long a time, and how the thought of Airlie and the wild moorland and the sea had not broken his heart.

It happens to most lads who go to college that they attach themselves to some friend and companion considerably older than themselves, who becomes their counsellor, teacher, and ally. Nothing of the kind was possible to the Whaup. His individuality was too strong to admit of his becoming the *doppel-gänger* of anybody. No sooner had he thrown himself into the midst of college life than his exuberant spirits, along with a touch of his old love of devilment, attracted round him a considerable circle of associates, of whom he was the heart and soul. It is to be feared that the Whaup and his friends did not form the most studious coterie to be found in the old High Street building. Plenty of study there was; and the Whaup worked as hard as any of them. But the wild evenings which these young gentlemen spent in their respective lodgings —the stories told of their daredevil pranks—and the very free-and-easy manners of more than one

of them—gained for this band a dangerous reputation. They were held to be rather wild by the more discreet and methodical of their fellow-collegians. The Whaup himself was known to stick at nothing. His splendid physique gave him many advantages; and after having let daylight come in upon their rambling and hotheaded disquisitions on poetry or "metapheesics," on their too copious beer-drinking and smoking of lengthy clays, many were chagrined to meet the Whaup in the forenoon as fresh and pink as a daisy, having just completed his morning classes, and setting out for a long swinging walk round by the Botanic Gardens and the Kelvin.

"What a powerful fellow your cousin is," said Sir Peter, as they drove along George Street. "Did you hear of his adventure at the theatre? No? Good story; very good story; ho! ho! excellent story. He takes three young ladies to the theatre —cabman insults him—he hands the young ladies into the theatre, comes back, hauls the cabman down from his box and gives him a thorough thrashing in about a minute. Up comes another cabman, squares up, is sent flying into the arms of a policeman; the policeman admires pluck, and says it serves them both right. Your cousin goes into the theatre, sits down, nobody knows. Ho, ho! Ha, ha! Ha, ha!"

"But, pray, who were the young ladies?" says Coquette, with a touch of proud asperity.

"Young ladies—young ladies—young ladies—who can remember the names of young ladies?" said, or rather hummed, Sir Peter, keeping time by tapping on the carriage window. "Why, I remember! Those charming girls that sing—what's the song?—why, the doctor's daughters, you know, Kate, and Mary, and Bess—all of them Menzies, Menzies, Menzies!"

"I think my cousin ought to attend to his studies, rather than go about with young ladies," said Coquette.

"So, ho!" cried Sir Peter. "Must a young man have no amusement? Suppose he caps his studies by marrying one of the doctor's daughters!"

"There are plenty to choose from," said Coquette, with an air of disdain.

Indeed, the mention of those three young ladies rendered Coquette silent for the rest of the drive; and Sir Peter was left to talk and sing to himself. Yet it was but a little time before that Coquette had clapped her hands with joy on hearing that the Whaup had made those acquaintances, and that she had eagerly asked Lady Drum if it was probable he might marry one of them. Why should she suddenly feel jealous now, and refuse to speak to this

poor Sir Peter, who was risking his dinner to do her a service?

Her face lightened considerably when the carriage was pulled up, and she got out to look with some curiosity on the gaunt and grey house in George Street, which bore a number she had often written on her letters. Many a time she had thought of this house, and mentally drawn a picture of it. But the picture she had drawn was of a small building with a porch, and green casements, and a big square in front, with trees in it—in short, she had thought of a quiet thoroughfare in an old-fashioned French town. She was more grieved than disappointed with the ugliness of this house.

Sir Peter led her up the entry, and up the stone stairs to the first landing. It was her first introduction to the Scotch system of building houses. But her attention was suddenly withdrawn from this matter by a considerable noise within, and over the noise there broke the music of a song, which was plentifully accompanied by rappings on a table or on the floor.

"Ah, c'est lui!" she suddenly cried. "I do know it is he."

The Whaup, to tell the truth, had not a very beautiful voice, but it was strong enough, and both

Sir Peter and Coquette could hear him carelessly shouting the words of an old English ballad—

> Come lasses and lads, away from your dads,
> And away to the maypole hie,
> For every fair has a sweetheart there,
> And the fiddlers standing by!
> For Willy shall dance with Jane,
> And Johnny has got his Joan,
> To trip it, trip it, trip it, trip it, trip it up and down,

while there was a measured beating of hands and feet. Sir Peter had to knock twice before any one answered; and when the door was opened, lo! it was the Whaup himself who appeared—there being no one else in the house to perform the office.

"What! is it you, Coquette!" he cried, seizing both her hands.

"Oh, you bad boy!" she cried, "how you do smell of tobacco!"

And, indeed, there came from the apartment he had just left—the door of which was also wide open—rolling volumes of smoke, which nearly took Sir Peter's breath away.

"But what am I to do with you?" he said. "Mine is the only room in the house that isn't in confusion just now——"

"We will go in and see your friends, if you do not object, and if the gentlemen will permit us,"

said Coquette, at once. Perhaps she was desirous of knowing what company he kept.

You should have seen how swiftly those young men put away their pipes—and how anxious they were to get Coquette a chair—and how they strove to look very mild and good. You would have fancied they had been holding a prayer meeting; but their manner changed perceptibly when Coquette hoped she had not interrupted their smoking, and graciously asked that the gentleman who had been singing should continue, at which there was much laughter, for the Whaup looked confused. It was in the midst of this re-awakening of voices that Sir Peter—who was beginning to feel uncomfortable about his dinner—explained the object of his visit, and asked the Whaup if he could come along later in the evening. Of course, his friends counselled him to go at once; but he was not so lost to all notions of hospitality.

"No," said he; "I will come and see you to-morrow night."

Coquette looked hurt.

"Well," said her cousin to her, with a dash of his old impertinence, "you can stay here if you like, and let Sir Peter go home with an excuse for you."

The young men looked as if they would have

liked to second that invitation, but dared not. Indeed, they regarded Coquette—whose foreign accent they had noticed—in rather an awe-stricken way. Perhaps she was a French princess who had come on a visit to Sir Peter; and she looked like a princess, and had the calm graciousness and self-possession of a princess. That was no blushing country girl who sat there—the small lady with the delicate and pale features, and the large, quiet, dark eyes, who had a wonderful air of ease and grace. The rough students felt their eyes fall when she looked at them. What would they not have given to have spoken with her for a whole evening, and looked at the wonders of her costume and the splendour of her dark hair?

"What do you say, Coquette?" said the Whaup; and they all pricked up their ears to hear her called by this strange name.

Coquette laughed. Doubtless she considered the proposal as a piece of her cousin's raillery; but any one at all conversant with the secret likings of the young lady—as the Whaup was—must have known that she was perhaps not so averse to spending an evening with a lot of young students as she ought to have been.

"Perhaps I should like it," she said, frankly, "if you did all sing to me—and tell stories—and make

me one of your companions. But I am very hungry —I have had no dinner."

"Bravely and sensibly spoken!" cried Sir Peter, who had become alarmed by this outrageous suggestion put out by the Whaup. "Come along, my dear Miss Cassilis; your cousin will come to-night, or to-morrow night."

"Good-bye, Tom," said Coquette. "I am pleased you enjoy yourself in Glasgow. It is not all study and books. And now I know why you did write to me such very short letters."

"Look here, Coquette," said he, as they were leaving. "What are you going to do to-morrow forenoon? I suppose you'll be driving about, and seeing grand people, and you won't have a word for me."

"Ah, you wicked boy, to say that!" she said, reproachfully. "You will come for me to-morrow when you choose—nine, ten, eleven—and we will go for a walk just where you please, and I will speak to nobody but you, and you shall show me all the things worth seeing in Glasgow and round about."

"Why, Coquette, it is all like a dream come true!" he cried. "And to think that you are in Glasgow at last!"

With that, Sir Peter offered the young lady his

arm, and hurried her down stairs. He was anxious about his dinner.

The Whaup returned to his companions, and instantly perceived that they were treating him with unusual respect. They *would* talk, also, about the young lady; and whether she would remain long in Glasgow; and where the Whaup had seen her first; and whether she would likely be up at his rooms any other evening. Master Tom was not very communicative, but at last one ventured to say—

"Tell us, now, Cassilis, is she likely to be married soon?"

"She is," said the Whaup.

"To whom?"

"To me," said the Whaup.

CHAPTER XII.

All about Kelvin-side.

TALK of Glasgow being a dull grey city! When the Whaup got up next morning at half-past six, and looked out, it seemed to him that the empty pavements were made of gold, that the fronts of the houses were shining with a new light, and the air full of a delicious tingling. For did not the great city hold in it the beating heart of Coquette; and were not all its thoroughfares aware of the consecration that had fallen on them by her arrival? Away he sped to his classes; and his boots, as they rang in the street, clattered "Coquette!" and "Coquette!" and "Coquette!" If the Professor had known that Coquette was in Glasgow, would he have looked so dull, and been so miserably slow? What was the use of this gabble about ancient languages, when Coquette had brought her pretty French idioms with her, and was even now getting up to look out on the greenness of Hillhead and down on the sluggish waters of the Kelvin. Alas! why were the half-

hours so full of minutes; and might not the sunshine be altogether faded out of the sky before he could get westward to welcome Coquette?

He dashed home from college to his lodgings, and there arrayed himself in his tidiest garments, and freshened himself up, singing the while some snatches of "Sally in our Alley." The tall and smart young man who now issued into George Street, and made his way westward as fast as his long legs could carry him, bore but little resemblance to the devil-may-care lad who had lounged about Airlie and tormented his father's neighbours. Yet he was singing one of his boyish songs as he strode along the thoroughfares, and ever and anon he looked up at the sky to make sure that it was going to be kindly to Coquette. Why, the light mist of the morning was now clearing away, and a blaze of sunshine was striking here and there along the northern side of Sauchiehall Street. 'Tis a pleasant street—under particular circumstances. Shops are its landmarks; but they grow poetic in the eyes of youth. It seemed to the Whaup that the boots in the windows looked unusually elegant; that never before had he seen such taste in the arrangement of Normandy pippins; that even the odour of a bakery had something in it that touched sweet memories. For, indeed, the shops and the windows, and the

people, and Sauchiehall Street itself, were to him on that morning but phantasms; and all around him, the air, and the sky, and the sunshine, were full of Coquette, and nothing but Coquette. He fell in love with Sauchiehall Street on that morning; and he has never quite forgotten his old affection.

He walked up to the front of the great house overlooking the Park, which Sir Peter had borrowed, and was glad that the door was opened by a girl instead of by a man-servant—a creature whom he half feared and half disliked. The young person had scarcely shown him into the spacious drawing-room when he heard a quick flutter of a dress, and Coquette herself came rushing in, and overwhelmed him with her questions, and her exclamations, and her looks. For she could not understand what had altered him so much until she perceived that his moustache, which had been rather feeble on their last meeting, had now assumed quite formidable proportions; and it was only a significant threat on his part that caused her to cease her grave and ironical compliments.

And where should they go on this bright summer morning?

"Lady Drum, she has gone into the town to buy ornaments for the grand dinner of Friday," said Coquette, "to which you are invited, Mr. Whaup,

by a gilt card which I did address for you this morning. And I would not go with her—for I said —my cousin comes for me, and he would be angry if I were not here, and he is very disagreeable when he is angry. *Enfin*, let us go, and you will amuse me by all that is to be seen."

Now when Coquette had got herself ready, and they went out, the Whaup took a very strange road to the city by going down to Kelvin Bridge. The farther they went—over Hillhead and farther westward—the less appearance there was of streets and shops, until the Whaup had to confess that he had led her, of *malice prepense*, directly away from the town. And so they went into the country.

He took her into all the haunts and nooks that he had explored by himself—down to the Pear-tree Well—back again, and along the Kelvin, and then up by the cross road which leads to Maryhill. Here they paused in their wanderings to look over the great extent of country which lay before them; and the Whaup told her, that far away on the left, if she had a wonderful telescope, she might see the lonely uplands about Airlie, and catch a glimpse of the long sweep of the sea.

"I used to come up here," he said, "all by myself, and wonder what you were doing away down

there. And when the sun came out, I thought—'Ah, Coquette is enjoying herself now.'"

"All that is very pretty," said Coquette, "and I should be sorry for you, perhaps. But I do find you have still some amusement. What is it you sing—'Come, lasses and lads, away from your dads.' What is dads?"

"Never mind, Coquette. It is only a song to keep up one's heart, you know—not to be talked about on a morning like this, between us two. I want to say something very nice to you, and friendly, and even sentimental, but I don't know how. What shall I say?"

"It is not for me to tell you," remarked Coquette, with some air of disdain.

And yet, as they stood there, and looked away over the far country towards Airlie and the sea, they somehow forgot to talk. Indeed, as Coquette, leaning on the low stone wall, gazed away westward, a shadow seemed to cross her face. Was she thinking of all that had happened there, and of her present position—mayhap working grievous wrong by this thoughtless kindness to her cousin? Was she right in trying to atone for previous neglect by an excess of goodness which might be cruel to him in after-life? Her companion saw that a sudden silence

and pensiveness had fallen over her, and he drew her gently away, and began their homeward walk.

On their way back, they again went down to the Kelvin, and he proposed that they should rest for a little while in the bit of meadow opposite the Pear-tree Well. They sat down amid the long grass, and when any one crossed the small wooden bridge, which was but seldom, Coquette hid her face under her sunshade, and was unseen.

"Are you tired?" said the Whaup.

"Tired? No. I do walk about all day sometimes at Airlie."

"Then why have you grown so silent?"

"I have been thinking."

"Of what?"

"Of many things—I do not know."

"Coquette," he said suddenly, "do you know that the well over there used to be a trysting place for lovers, and that they used to meet there and join their hands over the well, and swear that they would marry each other some day or other? I suppose some did marry and some didn't; but wasn't it very pleasant in the meantime to look forward to that? Coquette, if you would only give me your hand now! I will wait any time—I have waited already, Coquette; but if you will only say now that I may look forward to some day, far away, that I can come and remind

you of your promise—think what it would be to have that to carry about with one. You will be going back to Airlie, Coquette—I mayn't see you for ever so long."

He paused, for she seemed strangely disturbed. She looked up at him with eyes which were wild and alarmed.

"Ah, do not say any more," she said, "I will do anything for you, but not that—not that."

And then she said, a moment afterwards, in a voice which was very low and full of sadness—

"Or see, I will promise to marry you, if you like, after many, many years—only not now—not within a few years—afterwards I will do what you like."

"But have I offended you? Why do you cry, Coquette? Look here, I'd cut my fingers off before I would ask anything of you that pained you. What is the matter, Coquette? Does it grieve you to think of what I ask?"

"No—no!" she said, hurriedly, with tears stealing down her face. "It is right of you to ask it—and I—I must say yes. My uncle does expect it, does he not? and you yourself, Tom, you have been very good to me, and if only this will make you happy, I will be your wife."

"You will?" said he, with his handsome face burning with joy.

"But—but—" said Coquette, with the dark eyes still wet, and the head bent down so that he could scarce see her face, "not until after many years. And all that time, Tom, I shall pray that you may get a better wife than I—and a wife who could be to you all that you deserve—and in this long time you may meet some one, and your heart will say, 'She is better for me than Coquette'——"

"Better than you, Coquette!" he cried, "Is there anybody in all the world better than you?"

"Ah, you do not think—you do not remember. You do not know anything of me yet—I am a stranger to you—and I have been brought up differently from you. And did not Leesiebess say I had come to do mischief among you—and that my French bringing up was dangerous?——"

"But you know, Coquette, that your goodness even turned the heart of that horrible old idiot towards you; and you must not say another word against yourself, for I will not believe it. And if you only knew how proud and happy you have made me," he added, taking her hand affectionately and gratefully.

"I am glad of that," said Coquette, in a low voice. "You deserve to be very happy. But it is a great many years off, and in that time I will tell you more of myself than I have told you yet. I

cannot just now, my poor boy, for your eyes are so full of gladness; but some day you will believe it fortunate for you if you can marry some one else —and I will rejoice at that too."

"Why," said he, with some good-natured surprise in his voice, "you talk as if there was some one *you* wanted to marry."

"No," said Coquette, with a sigh, "there is no one."

"And now, then," said the Whaup gaily, as he assisted her to rise, "I call upon all the leaves of the trees, and all the drops in the river, and all the light in the air, to bear witness that I have won Coquette for my wife; and I ask the sky always to have sunshine for her, and I ask the winds to take care of her and be gentle to her, for isn't she my Coquette?"

"Ah, you foolish boy!" she said, with sad and tearful eyes, "you have given me a dangerous name. But no matter. If it pleases you to-day to think I shall be your wife, I am glad."

Of course, in lover's fashion, he laughed at her fears, and strove to lend her a leaven of his own high-hearted confidence. And in this wise they returned to Glasgow, as lovers have done before them, as lovers will do after them again and again, so long as youth hungers for bright eyes, and laughs to scorn

all the perils the future may enfold. And if the Whaup thought well of Glasgow on that morning when he set out, you may guess what he thought of the city as he now returned to it, and of the strange transfiguration undergone by the distant clouds of smoke, and the tall chimneys, and the long and monotonous streets. Romance had bathed the old grey town in the hues of the sunset; and for him henceforth Glasgow was no longer a somewhat commonplace and matter-of-fact mass of houses, but a realm of mystery and dreams which love had lit up with the coloured lime-light of wonder and hope.

CHAPTER XIII.

Lady Drum's Dinner-party.

So Coquette had engaged herself to marry her cousin. She knew not why, but there were strange forebodings crowding her mind as she contemplated that as yet distant prospect. It seemed to her that life would be a pleasant and enjoyable thing, if all the people around her were satisfied like herself, to leave it as they found it, and continue those amicable relations which were quieter, safer, more comfortable than the wild and strange perplexities which appeared to follow in the train of love. Love had become a fearful thing to her. She looked forward to meeting Lord Earlshope with something very like alarm; and yet his absence was a source of vague unrest and anxiety. She longed to see him; and yet dreaded a repetition of those bizarre and terrible scenes which had marked the opening days of their intimacy. And the more she looked at her own position—the longer she dwelt on the possibilities that lay before her in the future—the less could she

unravel the toils that seemed gathering around her and binding her with iron chains.

Was this, then, the happy phase of life into which she had seen, with something of envy, her old companions and playmates enter? Was this the delight of being in love? Were these the joyous experiences which were sung in many a ballad, and described in many a merry theatre-piece, and dwelt lovingly upon in many a story?

"I am eighteen," she said to herself, in these solitary musings. "It is the time for young people to be in love—and yet I hate it and fear it—and I wish that I did never come to this country. Alas! it is too late to go away now."

And again she asked herself if she had brought those perils—now looming distinctly in the future—upon herself by her own fault. Wherein had she erred? Surely not through selfishness. She loved Lord Earlshope, and was content to be loved by him, without even dreaming that he was thereby bound to her in any shape whatever. Indeed she seemed to think that by way of reparation to her cousin it was her duty to marry him, and she had consented only because she thought she would make him happy. In neither direction was there the least regard for herself, but only a desire to please her friends all round; and yet it seemed that

those very efforts of hers were doomed to plunge her deeper and deeper into the sea of troubles in which she found herself sinking. Was there no hand to save her? She knew not how it had all come about; but she did know that, in the odd moments in which a consciousness of her situation flashed upon her, a vague terror took possession of her, and she looked forward with dismay to the coming years.

These moments, fortunately, occurred at considerable intervals. The temperament of the girl was naturally light and cheerful. She was glad to enjoy the quiet pleasures of everyday life, and forget those gloomy anxieties which lay in the future. And this visit to Glasgow was full of all manner of new experiences, delights, excitements, which drove her forebodings out of her head, and led the Whaup to believe that she was proud to have become his affianced wife. Why had she cried, he asked himself, when he urged his suit in that bit of meadow on the banks of the Kelvin? It did not matter. The Whaup was not himself inclined to morbid speculation. Doubtless, girls were strange creatures. They cried when they were most pleased. They turned pale, or fainted, or achieved some other extraordinary feat, on the smallest emotional provocation. It was enough for him to hear Coquette's

merry laugh to convince him that she was not very sorry for what she had done; and everybody, from Lady Drum downwards, bore testimony to the fact that the visit to Glasgow had wonderfully improved the girl's health and spirits. You had only to look at the new and faint colour in her pale cheeks, and the glad brightness of her eyes.

Then there was the grand dinner coming off, which was to introduce Coquette to Lady Drum's Glasgow friends. The Whaup, of course, was invited; and, as there never had been occasion for his wearing evening dress down in Airlie, his slender store of money was deeply dipped into by his preparations. But when his name was announced, and he walked into the drawing-room, where Lady Drum was receiving her guests, the appearance of the tall and handsome young man attracted a good many eyes; and Coquette—who had ran forward to meet him—was quite overcome by wonder and delight over his transformation from a raw country lad into an elegant young gentleman, and could not refrain from saying as much to him in a whisper. The Whaup—who had looked round for her on his entrance into the room—laughed, and blushed a little, and then drew her away into a corner, and said—

"It is all the white tie, Coquette, isn't it? Don't

you think I've managed it well? But I am awfully afraid that a sneeze would send everything flying, and fill the air with bits of cambric. And it was very good of you, Coquette, to send me those studs —don't they look pretty?—and I'll kiss you for sending me them whenever I get the chance."

With which Coquette drew herself up, and said—

"You do talk of kissing me as if it were every day. Yet you have not kissed me, nor are likely to do that, until you are a great deal better-behaved, and less vain of yourself. You do talk of not being able to sneeze, merely that I look at the negligent way you have made your necktie and your collar—to open your throat, you foolish boy, and give yourself a cold."

At this moment Sir Peter bustled up to get hold of Coquette, and introduce her to some civic dignitaries; and the Whaup, with some chagrin, saw her disappear in a crowd of bailies. He himself was speedily recalled to his duty, for the remainder of the guests were arriving rapidly, and among them were some whom he knew. He soon found himself being teased by the daughters of his friend, Dr. Menzies—three tall, light-haired, merry-hearted girls —who rather made a pet of him. And all at once one of them said to him—

"Why, is that your cousin there—the girl in white, with the tea-rose in her breast? It is? How handsome she is; and how well she knows the proper sort of flower for her dark hair! Did you say she was an Italian?"

"No—a Mongolian," said the Whaup emphatically; for he did not like to have Coquette spoken of by anybody in this cool and critical fashion.

"Does she sing?"

"I should think so," he said, curtly.

At this very moment Coquette came towards him, and then—seeing that he was talking to three young ladies—suddenly turned, and looked for Sir Peter, whom she had just left. The Whaup was at her side in a moment.

"What is it, Coquette?" he said.

"Nothing," she said, coldly.

"You know you were coming to speak to me."

"But I did find you engaged," she said, with a slight touch of *hauteur* in her tone. "Who are these young ladies? Are they your friends whose father is the doctor? Why do you leave them?"

"Coquette, if you are unreasonable I will go away and not return the whole evening. What did you come to tell me?"

"I did come to say," replied Coquette, speaking with a studied and calm carelessness, "that Lady

Drum has asked Bailie Maclaren (I do think that is the name) to take me in to dinner, and I do not like it, for I would rather have sat by you; but it is of no consequence since you are occupied with your friends."

"Ho, ho!" said the Whaup confidently; "Lady Drum asked me to take in that old woman with the feathers, Mrs. Colquhoun; but don't you imagine I am such a fool, Coquette—oh, no!"

"What will you do?" said Coquette, with her face brightening up.

The Whaup said nothing for a second or two, but just then, a motion towards pairing having taken place,—elderly gentlemen bowing graciously and desirous of "having the honour"—the Whaup darted up to Bailie Maclaren—a venerable person in spectacles, who was looking out for his appointed partner —and said in a hurried whisper—

"I beg your pardon, sir, but Lady Drum bids me tell you she would be much obliged if you would kindly take in Mrs. Colquhoun—the old lady near the piano—do you see her?"

The Whaup did not wait for any reply from the bewildered old gentleman, but instantly returned to Coquette, caught her hand, placed it on his arm, and hurried her into the dining-room in defiance of all order and the laws of precedence. Not for some

time did Lady Drum see what had occurred. It was not until the soup had been cleared away that she caught a glimpse of Coquette and the Whaup sitting comfortably together at a portion of the table where neither ought to have been, and the face of the young lady, who wore tea-rosebuds twisted in the loose masses of her dark hair, was particularly bright and happy, for her companion was telling her wonderful stories of his college life—lies, doubtless, for the most part, or nearly approaching thereunto.

"It was rather shabby of you, Coquette," he said, "to run away like that when I wanted to introduce you to Dr. Menzies' girls."

"I was introduced to too many people—I cannot remember all such names. Besides, I do not like girls with straw-coloured hair."

"Oh, for shame, Coquette! You know it isn't straw-colour but golden, and very pretty. Well, I would have introduced you to those two young ladies who sit near Sir Peter, and who have hair as dark and as handsome as your own."

"Who are they?" said Coquette submissively; for she was bound to be consistent.

"They live in Regent's Park Terrace," said the Whaup—which did not afford his companion much information—" and they have the most lovely con-

tralto voices. You should hear the younger one sing the 'Ash Grove.'"

"I do think you know too many young ladies," said Coquette with a pout,—which was so obviously assumed, that he laughed; and then she began to tell him in confidence, and in a very low voice, that she was very anxious for the appearance of the first *entrées*, merely that she should have a little sparkling wine.

"Champagne!" said the Whaup suddenly to the servant behind him; at which Coquette looked much alarmed and embarrassed. The man went and brought a bottle, and the Whaup was rude enough to take it from him and fill Coquette's glass, and then smuggle it behind a big epergne, where it was wholly concealed by flowers.

"You wicked boy!" said Coquette, fearing that all eyes had been drawn towards them; but the Whaup calmly gazed down the table and saw that the guests were occupied with their own affairs.

And so the dinner went on, and these two young people were very happy; for it was the first time that the Whaup had appeared in society along with Coquette, and he felt a right of property in her, and was proud of her. She had given him to understand that their marriage was a thing so distant and vague that it was scarcely to be thought of as yet;

but in the meantime he regarded her as virtually his wife, and no longer considered himself a solitary unit lost in this crowd of married people. He was very attentive to Coquette. He was particular as to the dainties which she ate; he assumed authority over her in the matter of wine. Why, it was as if they were children playing at being husband and wife—in a fantastic grotto of their own creation; while the serious interests of the world were allowed to pass outside unheeded, and they cared not to think of any future, so busy were they in wreathing flowers.

"Coquette," said he, "if you are good, I will sing you a song when we come into the drawing-room."

"I do know," said Coquette, with the least trace of contempt. "It is always 'Come lasses and lads —Come lasses and lads'—that is your song always. Now, if you did sing some proper song, I would play an accompaniment for you. But perhaps some of your young lady friends down there—can they play the accompaniment for you?"

"Oh, yes," said the Whaup, lightly. "But, of course, none of them can play or sing like you, you know. Now if you only saw yourself at this moment, Coquette—how your white dress, and the glare from the table, and the strong lights, make

your hair and your eyes look so dark as to be almost wild—and those pretty yellow rosebuds——"

"Have I not told you," said Coquette, with some asperity, "that it is very, very bad manners to mention one's appearance or dress? I did tell you often —you must not do it; and if people do hear you call me Coquette, what will they say of me?"

"Go on," said the Whaup, mockingly; "let us have all the lecture at once."

"Alas!" said Coquette, more sadly than she had as yet spoken, "there is another thing I would say —and yet of what use? I would wish you to give up thinking me so good and so perfect. Why do you think I can play, or sing, or talk to you better than any one else? It is not true—it is a great misfortune that you think it true. And if it was anybody but you, I would say it was compliments only—it was flattery; but I do see in your eyes what you think, although you may not say it. Do you know that you deceive yourself about me—and that it is a pain to me? If I could give you my eyes for a moment, I would take you round the table, and show you who is much prettier than I am—who does sing better—who has more knowledge—more sense—more nobleness. Alas! you can see nobody but me; and it is a misfortune."

"What do you mean by that, Coquette?" he

said, with vague alarm. "Why do you want me to look at people with different eyes?"

"Because," she said, in a low voice, but very distinctly, "you do risk all your happiness on a future so uncertain. When I look forward to a few years, I am afraid—not for myself, but for you. If I could give you my eyes, I would lead you to some one of your friends and bid you admire her, and teach you what a charming character she has, and ask you to pledge her to go with you all through the time that is to come. As for me—I am not sure of myself. Why did they call me Coquette? When I do think of all that you risk in giving your happiness to me to keep for a great many years—I —I—I despair!"

But the Whaup was not to be cast down by these idle forebodings.

"Why, Coquette," said he, "you are become as morbid as Lord Earlshope, and you talk nonsense besides, which he never does. You want me to believe that anybody else, in this room or any other room, is to be compared with you. That is not giving me new eyes—it is blinding me with a pair of spectacles. And I won't have your eyes, Coquette—pretty as they are—but yourself, eyes included. Why, what a small idiot you must be to

imagine that the world holds more than one Coquette!"

His companion smiled—perhaps rather sadly.

"It is a great change from your first belief of me—when you did think me dangerous and wicked. But perhaps they do still think that of me in Airlie. What would Leesiebess's husband answer to those pretty things you say of me—and are you so sure that all the people there are wrong, and you are right?"

Sure that Coquette was not a wicked and dangerous person?—the Whaup had not a word to say.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Rosebud.

WHEN the ladies had gone from the room, and the men had settled down to drink steadily, and talk the after-dinner sentiment which they probably called their opinions, the Whaup sat by himself, silent and gloomy. A full glass of claret remained on the table before him untasted. He stared at it as if it were some distant object, and the hum of the voices around him sounded like the murmur of the sea, as he had listened to it at night up on Airlie moor.

What did Coquette mean? Why did she put away into the future, as if it were something to be dreaded, the happy time which ought to have been welcomed by a young girl? As the Whaup puzzled over these things, he asked himself what hindered his going to her now, in the royal fashion of Lochinvar, and marrying her out-of-hand before she had time to say no?

Alas! Lochinvar belonged to the upper classes.

He could support the bride whom he stole away in that romantic manner; and his merry black eye, in bewitching the girl, and making her ready to ride with him over the Borders, was not troubled by any consideration as to how the two should be able to live. The Whaup looked up the table. There were rich men there. There were men there who could confidently place fabulous figures on cheques; and yet they did not seem to know what a magic power they possessed. They only talked feeble platitudes about foreign affairs; and paid further attention to that god which, enshrined in the capacious temple underneath their waistbelt, they had worshipped for many years. Had they ever been young? the Whaup asked himself. Had they known some fair creature who resembled, in some inferior fashion, Coquette? Was there at that remote period anybody in the world, in the likeness of Coquette, on whom their wealth could shower little delicate attentions? Had they been able to marry when they chose? Or were they poor in their youth—when alone money is of value to any one—only to become rich in their old age, and think with a sigh of the Coquette of long ago, and console themselves with much feeding and the imposing prominence of a portly stomach?

Dr. Menzies, it is true, had vaguely promised that, when his studies were completed the Whaup

should become his assistant, or even his junior partner. But how far away seemed that dim prospect! And why should Coquette—a princess on whom all the world ought to have been proud to wait—be bound down by such ignominious conditions and chances? The Whaup plunged his hands deep into his empty pockets, and stared all the more moodily at the glass.

Then suddenly there was a sound of a piano—a bright, sharp prelude which he seemed to know. Presently, too, he heard as through muffled curtains the distant voice of Coquette; and what was this she was singing? Why, that brisk old ballad of his own that she had heard him sing in his lodgings. Where had she got it? How had she learnt it? The Whaup started to his feet—all the gloom gone from his face. He stole out of the room—in the hubbub of vinous political fervour he was scarcely noticed—and made his way to the drawing-room door. This was what he heard—

Come lasses and lads, get leave of your dads,
And away to the maypole hie,
For every fair has a sweetheart there,
And the fiddlers standing by!
For Willy shall dance with Jane,
And Johnny has got his Joan,
To trip it, trip it, trip it, &c.

Coquette, then, was in no melancholy mood.

Why, what an ass he had been, to grow dismal when there still remained to him the proud possession of that promise of hers! That was his own song she was singing brightly and merrily, and with strange oddities of pronunciation. She herself belonged to him in a manner—and who was there that would not envy him? When the song was finished, the Whaup went into the room, and walked up to the piano, and sat down by Coquette, and told her that he knew nobody among the men, and had been forced to come in there.

"And where did you get that song, Coquette?" he asked.

"Monsieur!" observed Coquette, "you do talk as if you had the right to be here—which you have not. Do you not see that your friends, the doctor's young ladies, did laugh when you came in and walked over to me!"

"Where should I go, Coquette?"

"I will tell you," she answered in a low voice, as she pretended to turn over the music, "when at the dinner, I did see the youngest of the three young ladies look much at you. I have spoken to her since we came here. She is charming—and oh! very good, and speaks kindly of you, and with a little blush, which is very pretty on your Scotch young ladies. And when I asked her if she knows

this song, she did laugh and blush a little again—you have been singing it to her——"

"Oh, Coquette!" he said, "what a sly mouse you are—for all your innocent eyes—to be watching everybody like that."

"Bien! you go to her, and sit down there, and make yourself very agreeable. You do not know how much she is a friend of yours."

The Whaup began to lose his temper.

"I won't be goaded into speaking to anybody," said he, "and the first thing you have to do, Miss Coquette, to-morrow morning, is to come to a distinct understanding about all the nonsense you have been talking at dinner. What is it all about, Coquette? Are you proud? Then I will coax you and flatter you. Are you frightened? Then I will laugh at you. Are you unreasonable? Then—then, by Jingo, I'll run away with you!"

Coquette laughed lightly; and the Whaup became aware that several pairs of eyes had been drawn towards them.

"This place is getting too hot for me," he said. "Must I really go back?"

"No," she said, "you will stop and sing—something bright, joyful, happy—and you will forget the melancholy things we have been talking about. Have I been unkind to you? You will see I will

make it up, and you shall not sit gloomy and sad again at dinner. Besides, it does not improve your good looks: you should be more of the wild boy that I saw when I did first come to Airlie."

"I wish we were both back at Airlie, in those old times!" said the Whaup, suddenly.

Coquette looked at him with some surprise. She had caught quite a new tone of sadness in his voice, and his eyes had grown wistful and clouded.

So he, too, was striving to pierce that unknown future, and seemed bewildered by its vagueness and its gloom. The seriousness of life seemed to have told on him strangely since he left the quiet moorland village. What had wrought the change within the brief space of time that had elapsed since her arrival from France? Was she the cause of it all? —she, who was willing to sacrifice her own life without a murmur for the happiness of those whom she loved? Already, the first months of her stay at Airlie—despite the petty persecutions and little trials she had to endure—had become an idyllic period towards which she looked back with eyes filled with infinite longing.

All that evening she was the prominent figure in Lady Drum's drawing-room. When the men came in from their port wine and politics, they found that Coquette had established herself as a

sort of princess, and they only swelled the number of those who petted her and waited upon her. Towards two only she betrayed an open preference, and these were the Whaup and the youngest of Dr. Menzies' daughters. She so managed that the three of them were generally close together, engaged in all manner of private talk. The fair-haired young girl had approached with a certain diffidence and awe this queenly and dark little woman, whom everybody seemed to be talking about; but Coquette had only to smile a little, and begin to talk a little in her foreign way, in order to win over the soft-hearted young Scotch girl. These three appeared, indeed, to form a group in the nebulous crowd of people who chatted, or drank tea, or listened to the music; and before the evening was over Coquette had impressed Miss Menzies—by that species of esoteric telegraphy known to women—with a series of notions which certainly neither had remotely mentioned.

"Coquette," said the Whaup, when all the people had gone but himself, and as he was bidding her good-night, "why did you try to make Mary Menzies believe that she and I were much greater companions, and all that sort of thing, than you and I? You always talked as if you were the third person talking to us two."

"It is too late for questions," said Coquette, with a mingled air of sauciness and gentleness. "You must go away now, and do not forget you go with me to the theatre to-morrow evening—and if you do send me some flowers I will put them in my hair."

"I wish you would give me one just now," he said, rather shyly.

She took the pale-tinted tea-rose out of her bosom and kissed it lightly (for Sir Peter was just then coming down the hall), and gave it him. The rose was a great consolation to the Whaup on his homeward way. And were not the shining stars overhead—shining so calmly, and clearly, and happily, that they seemed to rebuke his anxious forebodings?

"She is as pure as a star," he said to himself, "and as beautiful—and as far away. The years she talks of seem to stretch on and on, and I cannot see the end of them. The stars up there are far nearer to me than Coquette is."

Yet he held the rose in his hand, and she had kissed it.

CHAPTER XV.

The Whaup becomes anxious.

COQUETTE'S stay in Glasgow did not promise well for the Whaup's studies. On the very morning after she had given him a rose to console him on his homeward walk, he was again up at Lady Drum's house. He looked very blank, however, on entering the morning-room to find that venerable lady the sole occupant, and he saw by the shrewd and good-natured smile on her face that she perceived his disappointment.

"Yes, she is out," said Lady Drum. "Is that the question ye would ask?"

"Well, it is, to tell you the truth," said the Whaup.

"Could ye expect her to bide in the house on a morning like this? If there is a glint o' sunshine to be seen anywhere she is off and out like a butterfly before we have our breakfast ower."

"Young ladies ought not to go out alone like that," said the Whaup, who had suddenly acquired serious and even gloomy notions of propriety.

His elderly friend took him to the window. Before them lay the long terraces of the park, the deep valley, the trees, the river, and the opposite heights, all gleaming in a pallid and smoky sunshine. And on the terrace underneath the window there was a bench, and on the bench sat, all by herself, a young person, whose downcast face, bent over a book, was hidden underneath a white sunshade; and there was nothing at all by which to distinguish the stranger but her faintly yellow morning dress, that shone palely in the sun. Yet you should have seen how swiftly the Whaup's face cleared. In about thirty seconds he had taken an unceremonious farewell of Lady Drum, and hastened down into the park.

"You must not come to see me every day," said Coquette; "you do give up all your work."

"But look here, Coquette," he remarked, gravely, "isn't it the proper thing to pay a visit of ceremony after a dinner-party?"

"At ten o'clock in the forenoon?" she said, with a smile; "four o'clock is the time for such calls, and it is not to me you pay them."

He made no reply; but he drew away the book from her lap, and quietly shut it and put it in his pocket. Then he said—

"We are going to have a stroll through the Botanic Gardens."

So she surrendered herself—her only protest being a well-simulated sigh, at which he laughed—and away they went. Glasgow College, and all its class rooms, might have been in the Philippine Islands for anything that the Whaup remembered of them.

Many and many a time during that long and devious saunter, which took them a good deal farther than the Botanic Gardens, the Whaup—with that strange dissatisfaction with their present happiness which distinguishes lovers and fills the most fortunate period of human life with trouble—would drag back their aimless and wandering talk to the reasons Coquette had for being apprehensive of the future. Why was she disinclined to speak of a possible limit to the number of years he had yet to wait? Why did she almost pathetically counsel him to fix his affections on some one else?

Coquette replied gravely, and sometimes a little sadly, to these questions, but she had not the courage to tell him the whole truth. There was something so touching in the very trust that he reposed in her —in the frank and generous way that he appealed to her, and took it for granted that she would become his wife—that, in the meantime, she dared

not tell him that her heart still wandered away to another man. He did not know that his protestations of love sounded coldly in her ears, and only suggested what they would have been had they been uttered by another. He thought it strange that she was glad to get away from those little confessions and wondering hopes which are the common talk of lovers, and would far rather have him speak to her about his professional future, or even the details of his college life.

For herself, she seemed to think it enough if her cousin were pleased to walk with her; and some day, she doubted not, she would yield to his urgent wishes and become his wife. By that time, was it not likely that the strange unrest in her heart—that vague longing for the presence of one whose name she scarcely ever mentioned, would have died utterly away? And in the remote possibility of her giving herself to her cousin, was it not her duty now to try to eradicate that hapless love which had far more of pain than of pleasure in it? While the Whaup was eagerly sketching out the life which he and she should live together, Coquette was trying to make up her mind never again to see Lord Earlshope.

But it was a hard trial. A woman may marry this man or that man—her affections may shift and

alter—but she never forgets the man she loved with all the wonder, and idealism, and devotion of a girl's early love. Coquette asked herself whether she would ever forget Airlie, and the stolen interviews of those spring mornings, and the pathetic farewells that the sea, and the sky, and the shining landscape alone knew.

"Dreaming again," said the Whaup, gently. "I suppose you don't know that that is a river you are looking at?"

They were standing on the small wooden bridge that crosses the Kelvin, and she was gazing into the water as if it were a mirror on which all the future years were reflected.

"Does this river go to the sea?" she asked.

"Most rivers do," replied the Whaup—proud, like a man, of his superior scientific knowledge.

"And perhaps in a day or two it will see Arran."

"Why, you talk as if you were already anxious to leave Glasgow and go back," said the Whaup. "What amusement can there be for you there? My father is buried in that concordance. Lady Drum is here. Earlshope is deserted—by the way, I wonder what has become of Lord Earlshope."

"Let us go," said Coquette, hastily; and she took her arm off the wooden parapet of the bridge and

went away. The Whaup did not perceive that his mention of Lord Earlshope's name had struck a jarring note.

So they went leisurely in to Glasgow again, and all the way Coquette skilfully avoided conversation about the matters which were naturally uppermost in her companion's mind. Indeed, a discovery which she made greatly helped her out of the dilemma, and enlivened the remainder of their walk. She inadvertently slipped into French in making some remark; and the Whaup quickly replied to her in the same tongue. She was surprised and delighted beyond measure. She had no idea of his having studied hard since he left Airlie to extend the small acquaintance with the language he had picked up as a boy. She saw well what had urged him to do so, and she was pleased by this occult compliment. She insisted on their talking nothing but French all the way home; and the Whaup—with occasional stammering, laughing, and blushing—managed to sustain the conversation with tolerable ease and fluency. She corrected his idioms—very gently, it is true; and also hinted that he might, if he liked, adopt the familiar *tutoiement* which ought to exist between cousins.

"But I can't," said the Whaup. "My conversation books have taught me to say *vous;* and so,

until I learn, you must call me *tu*, and I will call you anything that comes uppermost."

This, and all that followed, was spoken in rough-and-ready French, the grammar of which was a good deal better than its pronunciation; and the care which the Whaup had to bestow on his language lent an unromantic and matter-of-fact character to the subjects of their talk, to Coquette's great relief.

When they had reached the house she said—

"You must come in and make an apology to Lady Drum for your inattention. Then you will have a little lunch. Then you will go home and attend to your studies until the evening. Then you will come here and go with us to the theatre; and you may bring a bouquet for Lady Drum, if you choose."

"Any more commands, Coquette?" he said. "What, nothing more? How many lines of Greek must I do if I am disobedient?"

"You must not be rude to me," she remarked, "because that is a trace of your bringing-up at Airlie, which you have nearly forgotten. It is a relic of your savage nature. You are much improved; you are almost civilised."

"Yes," said the Whaup, "I saw a cart of turnips go by yesterday quite unprotected from behind, and

I did not steal one. . . . . Hillo! who is that sitting with Lady Drum at the window?"

Coquette looked up, and did not betray the least emotion, although a sharp spasm shot across her heart.

"It is Lord Earlshope, is it not?" she said, in a low voice.

"Yes," said the Whaup, with a sudden coldness in his tone, and returning at once to his English, "it is rather singular he should come here just now, but that is his own affair. No one ever could tell what he would do next. Coquette, I don't think I shall go into the house just now—you make my excuse to Lady Drum."

"Very well," said Coquette, calmly.

She held out her hand to bid him good-bye. He was surprised. He expected she would have insisted on his going into the house; and, on the contrary, she seemed rather relieved that he was going away.

"What is the matter, Coquette?" he asked. "Are you vexed because I am going away? Very well—I will go in—come along."

And with that, he went up the steps; but he could not tell by her face whether or not she had been annoyed by his wishing to go. They entered the house together. Lord Earlshope rose as they

went into the room, and stepped forward to meet Coquette; and the Whaup watched the manner in which she advanced to shake hands with him. Why were her eyes cast down, and her face a trifle pale? She answered in almost an inaudible way the kindly inquiries which Lord Earlshope—whose manner was quite unconstrained, frank, and courteous—made as to her having enjoyed her visit to Glasgow. The Whaup himself, in shaking hands with his rival, was constrained to admit that there was something pleasant and friendly in Lord Earlshope's manner, and in the look of his clear light-blue eye, which rather disarmed suspicion. In a very few minutes the Whaup had completely thawed, and was laughing heartily at a letter sent by Mr. Gillespie, the schoolmaster, which Lord Earlshope read aloud to Lady Drum.

Nevertheless, as he went to his lodgings he was considerably disquieted. He did not like leaving Lord Earlshope in the company of Coquette. It seemed to him an infringement of that right of property which he had acquired by her promise. In the old days he was vaguely jealous, and was inclined to be rudely suspicious of Coquette's small prevarications; but his jealousy and his rudeness were readily dissipated whenever he came under the influence of Lord Earlshope's good nature, or

of Coquette's gentle solicitude. Now he had a greater right to look after her. Had he not sworn in the olden time to take care of her, and be her champion? Alas! the Whaup had yet to learn that a woman is best left to take care of herself in such delicate matters, and that no guard can be placed on the capricious wanderings of her affection.

CHAPTER XVI.

At the Theatre.

LORD EARLSHOPE and Lady Drum had been carelessly chatting at the window when the Whaup and Coquette drew near. They saw them walking up the slopes of the park to the house, and Lord Earlshope said—

"What a handsome fellow Tom Cassilis has grown! I have never seen any young fellow alter so rapidly."

"Has he not?" said Lady Drum, with a little touch of pride—for she fancied that both these young people somehow belonged to her. "I should like to see them married."

It is possible that this artless exclamation on the part of the old lady was put out as a feeler. She liked Tom Cassilis well enough; but, being mortal and a woman, she must have wondered sometimes whether Coquette might not wed a lord —especially a lord who had frequently betrayed his admiration for her. But, when she said this, Lord Earlshope betrayed no surprise. He merely said—

"They will make a handsome pair; and many a man will envy young Cassilis his good fortune."

Lady Drum was a trifle disappointed. Was there no mystery at all, then, connected with those romantic episodes in the Highlands? Lord Earlshope talked of her *protégée* as if she were merely some ordinary country girl who was about to marry and become the mistress of a household; whereas all the men she had heard talk of Coquette spoke of her as something rare and wonderful. Lady Drum was almost sorry that she had asked him to join them at the theatre that evening; but she reflected that, if Lord Earlshope were so indifferent, the peaceful progress of the two cousins towards marriage was rendered all the more secure. She only thought that Coquette would have made a beautiful and charming hostess to preside over the hospitalities of Earlshope.

"Ho, ho!" said Lady Drum, when Coquette came down to dinner dressed for the theatre, "We hae made our toilette something just quite extraordinar. Mr. Thomas is a fortunate laddie to hae so much done for him."

"I do not dress for him, or for any one," said Coquette, with an air of calm magnificence.

"Certainly not, certainly not!" cried Sir Peter, gaily. "Too much beauty, and grace, and all that

is delightful on earth to be bestowed on any one man. You will appeal to the theatre, my dear, to the whole theatre, and there won't be a look left for the stage. And what is the hour at which we go to captivate all the young men in the place, and dazzle our rivals with the flash of our eyes—when are we going, going, going?—ha, ha, trollol, trollol, trollo!"

"I wish, Sir Peter, you would not sing at your dinner. It is a strange sort o' grace," observed Lady Drum, severely.

"A natural one, my lady—natural, natural. Don't the blackbirds whistle among the cherry-trees, and the pigs grunt with delight over their meat? I would whistle like a blackbird if I could—to amuse Miss Coquette, you know—but as it is——"

"You prefer to copy the pig," remarked Lady Drum, with scorn.

"Too bad, isn't it, Miss Coquette? And I was getting as gay as a bullfinch in thinking of the wild dissipation of accompanying you to the theatre. And there will be many a young fellow there, you will see, who will scowl at me, and wish he was in my shoes; but don't you heed them, my dear. Old men like myself are far more to be depended on. What does your French song say—

Jeunesse trop coquette,
Ecoutez la leçon
Que vous fait Henriette,
Et son amant Damon——

do not start, my lady, that is not bad language; it is the name of Henriette's lover; and don't I wish Henriette, or any similar bewitching young creature, would take the trouble to teach me a lesson! I'd sit as mum as a mouse——"

"Sir Peter," remarked Lady Drum, "you must have dined elsewhere."

"No such luck, my dear," remarked her husband, cheerfully; "I mean I have not had the chance of getting any wine—which is your ungenerous insinuation. But now, but now—we shall drink deep of heavy flagons until the most ill-favoured ballet-girl appear an angel. What, ho, there, wine, wine!"

The fact was that, at the door, there were standing two servants, who dared not enter until their master was done with his private theatricals. When they had come in, and the glasses were filled, Sir Peter, whose performances as a thirsty soul fell far short of his professions, pledged a bumper to Coquette and her coming conquests, and wound up his speech with a pretty and sentimental French toast, the pronunciation of which reminded Coquette of the Whaup's efforts in the morning.

This going to the theatre was quite an excitement for Coquette, who had not visited any such place of amusement since she left France. Lady Drum warned her not to say anything about it in her letters to Airlie, or the chances were that the Minister would order her recall from Glasgow at once.

"And my cousin," said Coquette, "has he never been to any theatre?"

"That is more than I can say," remarked Lady Drum, with a smile.

When at length they drove down to the big building, and went up the broad staircase, and got into the corridor, there was an odour of escaped gas and a confused sound of music which quite delighted Coquette—it was so like the odour and the sound prevalent in the theatres she had visited long ago in France. And when they got into the box, which was the biggest in the theatre, they found the Whaup already there, with two bouquets awaiting Lady Drum and Coquette. Lady Drum, naturally taking the place of honour, was perhaps a little glad to screen herself in her corner by the curtains; but Coquette, with the calm air of a princess, and with her brilliant toilette getting a new splendour from the gleaming lights of the house, took her seat, and lifted her bouquet, and made

the Whaup a pretty speech of thanks which filled his heart with pleasure, and then turned her attention to the stage.

"Shall I ever be able," said the Whaup to himself, as he looked wistfully at her, "to give her pretty dresses like that, and buy her pearls for her neck and her hair, and take her to all the amusements?"

The young gentleman was rather proud; and would not even acknowledge to himself that Coquette could buy pearls for herself and pay for far more amusements than she cared to see.

The performances need not be described in detail. They consisted, in the first place, of a romantic drama of the good old kind, in which a lot of very pronounced characters—whose virtues and vices they took every opportunity of revealing to the audience—did impossible things in impossible places, and talked a language unfamiliar to any nation at present inhabiting the earth. This piece was to be followed by a burlesque, for which Sir Peter professed himself to be impatient.

"For," said he, "there is in every burlesque a young lady with a saucy face and pretty ankles, with whom you can fall in love for an hour or two with impunity. And I am anxious for her ap-

pearance; because Miss Coquette has quite deserted me, and I am left out in the cold."

The truth is, Coquette had discovered in her cousin a quite astonishing familiarity with this theatre. He was acquainted with all its arrangements, and seemed to know the name of everybody in connection with it. Now, how had he gained this knowledge?

"Oh, I do see that the life of the students is not all study," Coquette remarked, with a gracious sarcasm; "you do sometimes find them singing 'Come lasses and lads,' and they do waste time with tobacco and laughing, and even know a good deal about the actresses of the theatre. Why was none of that in your letters to Airlie?"

"Well, I'll tell you the truth, Coquette," said the Whaup, with a laugh and a blush that became his handsome face well, "I dared not tell anybody at Airlie I went to the theatre; nor do I think I should have gone in any case but for a notion I had that, somehow or other, you must like the theatre. You never told me that, you know, but I guessed it from - -from—from—"

"From my manner, or my talk? You do think me an actress, then? It is not a compliment."

"No, it is not that at all," said the Whaup. "You are too sincere and simple in your ways.

But somehow I thought that, with your having been brought up in the south, and accustomed to a southern liking for enjoyment and artistic things, and with your sympathy for fine colours, and for music, and all that—why, I thought, Coquette, you would be sure to like the theatre; and so, do you know, I used to come here very often—not here, of course, but away up there to that dark gallery—and I used to sit and think what the theatre would be like when Coquette came to see it."

He spoke quite shyly; for, indeed, he half fancied she might laugh at these romantic dreamings of his when he was far away from her in the big city; but when he ventured to steal a glance at her face, lo! the soft dark eyes were quite moist. And she pretended to look down into the circle of flowers he had given her, and said in a low voice—

"You have been thinking of me very much when I was down in Airlie, and you here by yourself. I do not deserve it—but I will show my gratitude to you some day."

"Why, Coquette," he said, "you need not thank me for it. Only to think of you was a pleasure to me—the only pleasure I had all that long winter time."

Had Lady Drum heard the whispered little sentences which passed between these two young folks,

she might, perhaps, have thought that they expressed far more genuine emotion than the bursts of rhetoric in which, on the stage, the lucky lover was declaring his passion for the plump and middle-aged heroine. But they took care she should hear nothing of it.

Presently in came Lord Earlshope with his crush-hat under his arm; and he, also, had brought two bouquets. The Whaup noticed, with a passing twinge of mortification, that these were far finer and more delicate flowers than he had been able to buy, and he expected to see his own poor gifts immediately laid aside. But he did not know Coquette. She thanked Lord Earlshope very graciously for the flowers, and said how fortunate it was he had brought them.

"For I do always like to throw a bouquet to the actress, after her long evening's work, yet I was becoming sorry to give her the flowers that my cousin did bring me. But you have brought one for her, too, if I may give it to her?"

"Why, of course," said Lord Earlshope, who probably did not put such value on a handful of flowers as did the Whaup; "and when you wish to give it her, let me pitch it on the stage, or you will certainly hit the man at the drum."

"But you must keep them for the young lady

of the burlesque," said Sir Peter; "she is always better looking than the heroine of the drama, isn't she, isn't she? Then you have a greater opportunity of judging."

"Why?" said Lady Drum, with a look of such severity as effectually to prevent her husband answering—instead, he turned away and gaily hummed something about

Ecoutez la leçon
Qui vous fait Henriette.

But there was another woman in the theatre who had attracted their attention before Lord Earlshope had arrived. She was seated in the corner of the box opposite, and, as a rule, was hidden behind the curtain. When they did get a glimpse of her, her manner and appearance were so singular as to attract a good deal of attention. She was of middle height, stout, with rather a florid face, coal-black hair, and a wild, uncertain look, which was seldom fixed on any object for two minutes together. Oddly enough, she stared over at Coquette, in rather a peculiar way, until that young lady studiously kept her eyes on the stage, and would not glance over to the occupant of the opposite box.

"Singular-looking woman, isn't she?" said Sir Peter. "Opium, eh! eh! Is that opium that makes

her eyes so wild? She drinks, I swear, and seems mad with drink, eh! eh! What do you say, Cassilis?"

"I wish you would not talk of that person," said Lady Drum; and then the conversation dropped.

About a quarter of an hour after Lord Earlshope had come into the theatre, this woman apparently retired from her corner behind the curtain, then walked forward from the back of the box to the front of it, and there stood at full length, looking over, with an odd expression of amusement on her face, at the group in front of Lady Drum's box. This movement was noticed by the whole theatre, and certainly it was observed by Lord Earlshope, for, during one second, his eyes seemed to be fixed on this woman, and then, still looking at her, he retreated a step or two from the front of the box, with his face become quite white.

"What is the matter?" said Lady Drum, anxiously—for he had been speaking to her—"you have become very pale—are you ill?"

"Lady Drum, I wish to speak with you privately for a moment," he said, quite calmly, but with a singular constraint of manner that somewhat alarmed her.

She rose at once, and followed him into the

corridor outside. There he stood, quite composed, and yet very pale.

"Would you mind taking Miss Cassilis home at once?" he said.

"Take her home! Why?"

"I cannot tell you why," he said, with some show of anxiety and impatience. "I cannot tell you why, but I wish, Lady Drum, you would. I beg you—I entreat you—to take her away instantly."

"But why?" said the old lady, who was at once perplexed and alarmed.

"You saw that woman opposite," said Lord Earlshope, rather abandoning the calmness of his demeanour. "She will come round here presently—I know she will—she will go into the box—she will insult Miss Cassilis—for Heaven's sake, Lady Drum, get her out of the way of that woman!"

"Bless me!" said Lady Drum, elevating her eyebrows, "are we a' to be frightened out o' our wits by a mad woman, and three men wi' us? And if there was no one wi' us," she added, drawing herself up, "I am not afraid of the girl being insulted if she is under my care; and what for should any woman, mad as she may be, fasten upon us? My certes! I will see that she does not come near the girl, or my name is not Margaret Ainslie."

For a moment or two Lord Earlshope stood irresolute, with mortification and anxiety plainly evident on his pale features; then he said, suddenly—

"I must tell you at once, Lady Drum. I have many a time determined to do so—but put it off until now—when I can be silent no longer. That woman in the theatre just now, a woman soddened and mad with brandy—is my wife—at least, she was my wife some years ago. Goodness knows, I have no reason to be afraid of her! but one—it is for the sake of Miss Cassilis I beg you, Lady Drum—to take her away—out of her reach—she is a woman of outrageous passions—a scene in a public place will have all the excitement of a new sort of drunkenness for her——"

To all these incoherent ejaculations, Lady Drum only replied—

"Your wife!"

"This is not a time to blame me for anything," he said, hurriedly. "I cannot give you any explanations just now. You don't know why I should have concealed my marriage with this horrible woman—but you will not blame me when you hear. All I want is to secure Miss Cassilis' safety."

"That," said Lady Drum, with perfect quiet, "is

secure in my keeping. You need not be afraid, Lord Earlshope—she is quite secure where she is."

"You mean to keep her in the theatre?"

"Most certainly."

"Then I will go. If I leave, her whim may change; but I see from her laughing to herself that she means mischief. I cannot charge my own wife at the police office."

He left the theatre there and then. Lady Drum returned to the box, and made some sort of apology for Lord Earlshope's absence. But she did not see much of what was going on upon the stage; for her thoughts were busy with many strange things that she now recollected as having been connected with Lord Earlshope; and sometimes she turned from Coquette's face to glance at the box opposite. Coquette was thoroughly enjoying the piece; the woman in the box opposite her remained hidden, and was apparently alone.

CHAPTER XVII.

Coquette is told.

LADY DRUM began to get afraid. Should she send Coquette at once back to Airlie? Her first impulse, on hearing the disclosures made by Lord Earlshope at the theatre, was one of indignation and anger against himself, for having, as she thought, unnecessarily acted a lie during so many years, and deceived his friends. She now understood all the strange references he had often made to married life—the half-concealed and bitter irony of his talk—his nervous susceptibility on certain points—his frequent appearance of weariness and hopelessness, as of a man to whom life was no longer of any value. She was amazed at the morbid sense of shame which made this man so anxious to avoid the confession of his having made a desperate blunder in his youth. Why had he gone about under false colours? Why had he imposed on his friends? Why had he spoken to Coquette as a possible lover might have spoken?

This thought of Coquette flashed upon Lady

Drum as a revelation. She knew now why the fact of Lord Earlshope's marriage had made her angry; and she at once did him the justice of remembering that, so far as she knew, he had made no pretensions to be the lover of Coquette. That had been Lady Drum's secret hope: he could not be blamed for it.

But at the same time there was something about the relations between Lord Earlshope and Coquette which she did not wholly understand; and as she felt herself peculiarly responsible for that young lady, she began to ask herself if she had not better make sure by sending Coquette home to her uncle. Lady Drum sat in a corner of her morning-room, and looked down from the window on the park. Coquette was sitting there as usual—for there was sunshine abroad, which she loved as a drunkard loves drink—and she was leisurely reading a book under the shadow of her sun-shade. How quiet and happy she looked—buried away from all consciousness of the world around her in that other world of romance that lay unfolded on her knee. Lady Drum had got to love the girl with a mother's tenderness, and as she now looked down on her she wondered what precautions could be taken to render the fair young life inviolate from wrong and suffering, if that were possible.

First of all, she wrote a note to Lord Earlshope, and sent it down to his hotel, asking him to call on her immediately. She wished to have further explanations before saying anything to Sir Peter, or, indeed, to any one of the little circle that had been formed at Airlie. At the moment she was writing this letter, Lord Earlshope was walking quickly up to the place where Coquette sat.

"Ah, it is you! I do wish much to see you for a few moments," she said, with something of gladness in her face.

He did not reply; but sat down beside her, his lips firm, and his brow clouded. She did not notice this alteration from his ordinary demeanour, but immediately proceeded to say, in rather a low voice, and with her eyes grown serious and even anxious—

"I have much to say to you. I have been thinking over all our position with each other, and I am going to ask you for a favour. First of all, I will tell you a secret."

Why did she look constrained, and even agitated? he asked himself. Had she already heard from Lady Drum? Her fingers were working nervously with the book before her—her breath seemed to go and come more quickly—and her voice was almost inaudible.

"This is what I must tell you," she said, with

her eyes fixed on the ground. "I have promised to my cousin to be his wife. I did tell you I should do that, and now it is done, and he is glad. I am not glad, perhaps—not now—but afterwards it may be different. And so, as I am to be his wife, I do not think it is right I should see you any more; and I will ask you to go away now altogether, and when we do meet, here or in Airlie, it will be the same with us as strangers. You will do this for my sake—will you not? It is much to ask, I shall be more sorry than you, perhaps; but how can I see you if I am to marry him?"

"And so we are to be strangers, Coquette," he said, quite calmly. "It is all over, then. We have had some pleasant dreaming; but the daylight has come, and the work of the world. When we meet each other, as you say, it will be as strangers—as on the first morning I saw you at Airlie, driving up the road in the sunlight, and was glad to know that you were going to remain at the Manse. All that happened down at Airlie is to be forgotten; and you and I are just like two people passing each other in the street, and not expecting, perhaps, even to meet again. Yet there are some things which neither you nor I shall ever forget."

"Ah, I know that—I know that!" said Coquette, almost wildly. "Do not speak of all that now.

Sometimes I do think I cannot do as my cousin wishes—I become afraid—I cannot speak to him—I begin to tremble when I think of all the long years to come. Alas! I have sometimes wondered whether I shall live till then."

"Coquette, what do you mean?" he said. "Have you resolved to make your life miserable? Is this how you look forward to marriage, which ought to be the happiest event in a woman's life, and the seal of all the happiness to come after? What have you done, Coquette?"

"I have done what I ought to do," she said, "and it is only at moments that I do fear of it. My cousin is very good; he is very fond of me; he will break his heart if I do not marry him. And I do like him very well, too. Perhaps, in some years, I shall have forgotten a great deal of all that is past now, and shall have come to be very fond of him, too; and it will be a pleasure to me to become his wife. You must not be sorry for me. You must not think it is a sacrifice, or anything like that. When I am afraid now—when I am sad too, so that I wish I could go away to France, and not see any more of this country—it is only when I do think of Airlie, you know, and of—of—"

She never finished the sentence, because her lips were beginning to quiver. And for a moment

too, his look had grown absent, as if he were calling up memories of the days of their meetings on the moor—meetings which were but recent, and yet which now seemed buried far away in the white mists of the past. All at once he seemed to rouse himself, and said, with some abruptness—

"Coquette, you do not blame me for being unable to help you in your distress. I am going to tell you why I cannot. I am going to tell you what will render it unnecessary for me to promise not to see you again; for you will hate the sight of me, and consider me not fit to be spoken to by any honest man or woman. Many and many a time have I determined to tell you; and yet it seemed so hard that I should make you my enemy—that you should go away only with contempt for me——"

She interrupted him quickly, and with some alarm on her face.

"Ah, I know," she said. "You will tell me something you have done—why? What is the use of that now? I do not wish to hear it. I wish to think of you always as I think now; and when I look back at our last meeting in Glasgow—you sitting there, I here, and bidding good-bye to all that time which began down in Airlie, I shall have pleasure of it, even if I cry about it. Why you tell me

this thing? What is the use? Is it wise to do it? I have seen you often about to tell me a secret. I have seen you disturbed and anxious; and sometimes I have wondered, too, and wished to know. But then, I did think there was enough trouble in the world without adding this; and I hoped you would remain to me always as you were then—when I did first begin to know you."

"Why, Coquette," he said, with a strange, half-tender look of admiration, "your generosity shames me all the more, and shows me what a horribly selfish wretch I have been. You don't half seem to know how good you are."

His voice dropped a little here, as there was some one coming along the road. Lord Earlshope and Coquette both sat silent, and did not look up, expecting the stranger to pass.

But the stranger did not pass. On the contrary, she came nearer, as if to sit down on the same seat with them, and so Lord Earlshope turned round to see who she was. No sooner had he done so than he started to his feet with an oath, and confronted the woman who stood before him. Coquette, alarmed beyond measure, saw that the stranger was the singular looking person, with the coarse and red face, and the unsteady black eyes, who had sat opposite her in the theatre the previous evening, and who

now regarded both herself and Lord Earlshope with a glance full of malicious amusement in it. He, on the other hand, had his face white with rage, and, indeed, had advanced a step or two as if to thrust her back from Coquette; but now he stood with apparent self-control, his hands being firmly clenched.

"You had better go home," he said, still facing the stranger. "I give you fair warning you had better go home."

"Why," said the woman, with a loud laugh, "you have not said as much to me for six years back. You might give me a pleasanter welcome. My dear," she added, looking to Coquette, "I am sorry to have disturbed you; but do you know who I am? I am Lady Earlshope. You are not surprised? Perhaps you don't understand? Indeed, I saw you were a foreigner by your dress last evening. The women in this country don't know how to dress; do they? What are you—Italian or French?"

Coquette had risen to her feet, and stood quite still—a trifle pale, perhaps, but not visibly alarmed. The woman advanced a step or two; Lord Earlshope caught her by the wrist. Her air of bantering merriment changed in a moment, and a glow of passion sprang to the hot, powerful-looking face, and the sullen black eyes. She wrenched away her

hand with an angry vehemence, and let loose all the terror of her tongue.

"Have you no shame, woman, that you make an exhibition of yourself in the open day?" he said. "Are you determined to give me the honour of appearing in a police court against you?"

With that she burst out into another laugh, the heartlessness and unreality of which sounded strangely in Coquette's ears.

"It is not the first time I have been in a police court. Did you hear of my horse-whipping that old Duke in the streets of Madrid? Yes, I thought you must have heard the story. Come, Harry, let's be friends. I will leave you with the little Italian. I have my carriage at the gate there—there is brandy in it—shall we celebrate the charming conjugal scene we have just got through? No!"

She shrugged her shoulders, and laughed in a vacuous way; it was apparent she required no more brandy.

"Good-bye, then, for the present. This little conversation with you, Harry, has been quite delightful—reminding one of old days—but don't you lay hands on me again, or, by heavens, you will be a dead man the next moment. *Addio, addio!* And for you, you pretty little signorina, with the black eyes and the dumb mouth, *quando avrò il piacere di*

rivederla? What, you don't speak Italian either? Never mind—*a rivederla! a rivederla!* I shall see both of you again, I hope."

She walked back along the road to the gate of the park, where an open carriage was waiting. A servant opened the door for her. She stepped up and took her seat, and drove off alone, laughing and kissing her hands in a tipsy fashion to the people she had just left.

"Coquette," said Lord Earlshope, "that is my wife."

He was watching every line of her face, with an anxious sadness, to gather what her first impulse would be. And yet he felt that in uttering these words he had for ever disgraced himself in her eyes, and deserved only to be thrust away from her with horror and shame. Indeed, he waited to hear her own lips pronounce his condemnation and decree his banishment.

Coquette came a step nearer and looked him in the face, and held out her hand, and said—

"I know it all now, and am very sorry for you."

"But don't you remember all that I have done, Coquette?" with wonder in his look. "I am not fit to take your hand. But if you would only listen to me for a moment—that is all I ask. Will you

sit down, Coquette? I cannot excuse myself, but I want to tell you something."

"You have had a sad life," said Coquette, calmly. "I do now know the reason of many things, and I cannot be angry. It is no use to be angry now, when we are going away from each other."

"You see that woman," he said, sinking down on the seat with an expression of the most utter and hopeless despair. "I married her when I was a lad fresh from college. I met her in Paris—I was travelling—she, too, was going about with her father, who called himself an officer; I followed her from town to town; and in three months I was married. Married!—chained to a wild beast rather. When I got to know the hideous habits of the woman to whom I was indissolubly linked, suicide was my first thought. What other refuge had I from a state of things that was worse than anything death could bring on me? The law cannot step in between her and me. Brutal and debased as she is, she has far too good a notion of the advantages of a tolerable income to risk it by doing anything on which I could claim a divorce. Ignorant and passionate she is; but she is not a fool in money matters; and so there was nothing for it but to buy up her absence by paying any price for it. I dis-

covered what sort of woman she was before we ever returned to England; and when I came back here, I came alone. I dreaded the exposure of the blunder I had committed, partly on my own account, but chiefly on account of the disgrace I had brought on my family. How could I introduce this drunken and insolent woman to my friends, and have them insulted by her open defiances of decency? Year after year I lived down there at Earlshope—hearing only of her wild escapades from a distance. I exacted from her, as a condition of giving her more than the half of my income, a promise to drop my name; and perhaps you may have heard of the notorious Mrs. Smith Arnold, with whom the London magistrates are familiar. That is the woman you have just seen. These stories came to me down at Earlshope, until I dared scarcely open a newspaper; and I grew to hate the very sight of a woman, as being related to the devil who had ruined my life. And then you came to Airlie."

He paused for a moment. She had never before seen him so moved.

"I looked in your pure and young face, and I thought the world seemed to grow more wholesome and sweet. I began to believe that there were tender and true-hearted women in the world; and

sometimes I thought what I might have been, too, but for that irremediable blunder. Fancy some sinner in hell, who is tortured by remorse over the sins and lost opportunities of his life, and there comes to him a bunch of pale violets, sweet with the fragrant memories of his youth, when the world was young and fair to him, and he believed in the girl who was walking with him and in the heaven over his head——"

"Ah, do not talk like that!" she said; "it is more terrible than all you have told me."

"You do not know the condition into which I had sunk. To you I was a mere idler, easy tempered, who walked about the country and amused himself indolently. To myself I was a sepulchre, filled with the dead bones and dust of buried hopes and beliefs. What had I to live for? When I went about and saw other men enjoying the comfort of happy domestic relations—men who had a home, and a constant companion and confidante to share their holiday excursions or their quiet summer evenings—my own solitude and wretchedness were all the more forcibly thrust on me. I shut myself up in that house at Airlie. It was enough if the days passed, and left me the enjoyments of hunger and thirst. Goodness knows, I did not complain much or seek to revenge myself on society for my

own mistake. If my blunder, according to the existing state of the law, demanded so much punishment, I was willing to suffer it. During these solitary days, I used to study myself as if there was another being beside me, and watch how the last remnants of belief in anything were being gradually worn away, bit by bit, by the irritation of this sense of wrong. If you had known me as I really was when you first saw me, you would have shrank away in fear. Do you remember the morning I got up on the dog-cart to talk to you?"

"Yes," said Coquette, in a low voice.

"For a few moments I forgot myself. When I left you at the Manse, I discovered to my intense astonishment that I was quite cheerful—that the world seemed ever so much brighter, and that Airlie moor looked well in the sunlight. Then I thought of your coming in among those gloomy Cameronians, and whether your light and happy southern nature, which I saw even then, would conquer the prejudice and suspicion around you. It was a problem that interested me deeply. When I got to know you a little you used to tell me, inadvertently, how things were going on at the Manse, and I saw that the fight would be a hard one, but that you would win in the end. First of all, you took your cousin captive—that was natural. Then

the Minister. Then you won over Leezibeth. There remains only Andrew now; for I think you would secure a large majority in a *plébiscite* of the villagers. As for myself, that I can scarcely talk about just yet. It seemed so harmless a thing at first for me to see you—to have the comfort even of looking at you from a distance as you sat in the little church —or to pass you on the road, with a look and a smile. There was a new life in Airlie. Sometimes I thought bitterly of what might have been but for the error which had ruined me; but that thought disappeared in the actual enjoyment of your presence. Then I began to play with the danger that would have been more obvious to another man, but which I laughed at. For was it possible that I could fall in love, like a schoolboy, and sigh and write verses? I began to make experiments with myself. You know the rest, Coquette; but you do not know the remorse that struck me when I found that my thoughtlessness had prepared a great misery for you."

"It was no misery," she said, simply; "it was a pleasure to me; and if it was wrong, which I do not know, it comes to an end now. And you—I am not angry with you, for your life has not been a happy one—and you did not know until we were

up in the Highlands that it mattered to me—and then you went away——."

"Coquette," he said, "I won't have you make excuses for me. I can make none for myself. When I look at you, and think of what I ought to have done when you came to Airlie—I should have told you there and then, and guarded against every possibility—I feel that I am an outcast. But who would have thought it possible?" he added, with his eyes grown distant and thoughtful. "I do not know how it has all come about; but you and I are sitting together here for the last time, and we are going different ways—whither, who can tell?"

With that Coquette rose—no trace of emotion visible on the calm face.

"Good-bye," she said. "I will hear of you sometimes through Lady Drum."

"Good-bye, Coquette," he said, taking her hand. And then a strange expression came over his face, and he said, suddenly, "It is madness and wickedness to say it, but I will say it. Coquette, you will never forget that there is a man in the world who loves you better than his own life—who will venture everything that remains to him in this world and the next to do you the tiniest service. Will you remember that—always? Good-bye, Coquette

—God bless you for your gentleness, and your sweetness, and your forgiveness!"

She turned from him, and walked away, and went up the steps towards the house, all by herself. As she passed through the hall, Lady Drum met her, and asked her a question. The girl replied, quite calmly, though rather in a low voice, and passed on. Lady Drum was struck with the expression of her face, which was singularly colourless and immobile; and she looked after her as she went up the stairs. Was there not something unsteady in her gait? The old lady followed her, and went to the door of her room, and listened. A great fear struck her heart, for within there was a sound of wild weeping and sobbing; and when she forthwith opened the door, and hurried into the room, she found Coquette sitting by the bedside, her face and hands buried in the clothes, and her slight frame trembling and convulsed with the passion of her grief.

"What is it, Coquette? What is it, Coquette?" she cried, in great alarm.

And she sat down by the girl, and drew her towards her bosom, as she would have done with her own child, and hid her face there. And then Coquette told her story.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Coquette's Forebodings.

SIR PETER was standing at the window, whistling —not for a wind, but perhaps for an appetite. His hands were in his pockets, and his hat rather on the side of his head. When he heard the footsteps of his wife on the stair, he removed his hat —she permitted no infringement of the ordinary rules of courtesy, even by her husband.

Lady Drum came in so hurriedly that he turned to see what was the matter. Indeed, she advanced upon him with such an air that he rather drew back, and certainly stopped his whistling. It was clear that the grave and stately lady was for once in her life in a towering passion.

"Are you a man?" she said, with wrath in her voice.

"I hope so," said Sir Peter, innocently.

"Then you know what you have to do. You have to go at once to Lord Earlshope—I have scarcely the patience to name him—and tell him

what every honest man and woman thinks of him—what it is he deserves for conduct unworthy of an African savage——."

"Good heavens, my lady!" cried Sir Peter, "do you mean me to murder the man? I am not Macbeth, and I won't be goaded into murdering anybody. What the dickens is it all about? What is the tragedy? Has he stolen some spoons? Whatever has turned you into a raging lioness?"

It was Coquette who answered him. She had come into the room immediately after Lady Drum, and she now came up, and interposed.

"It is all a mistake, Sir Peter," she said, calmly. "I did tell Lady Drum something—she did not wait to hear it all. Lord Earlshope has done nothing to be blamed—it is a misapprehension—a mistake."

"Why, Lord Earlshope is a married man!" said Lady Drum, hotly.

"That may be a crime, my dear," said Sir Peter, mildly; "but it is one that brings with it its own punishment."

"Lady Drum," said Coquette, in an intreating voice, "I do wish you to come away. I will explain it all to you. Indeed, have I not the right to say you shall not tell any one what I have told you?"

"Certainly," said Sir Peter. "Who wants to betray a young lady's secrets? Take her away, my dear child, and pacify her: I am afraid to meddle with her."

Lady Drum stood irresolute. On the one side was the beseeching of Coquette, on the other was the feather-brained husband, who apparently would not interest himself in anything but his lunch and his dinner. Yet the brave old Scotchwoman had a glow of indignation burning in her cheeks, over the wrong which she deemed to have been committed towards the girl intrusted to her charge. But Coquette put her hand on her arm, and gently led her away from the room.

"That's right," said Sir Peter to them, "keep your secrets to yourselves—they are dangerous property to lend. I don't want to hear any mysteries. I am for an easy life."

When they had gone, he said to himself, drumming with his fingers on the window-panes—

"Earlshope married—not surprised at it. Very strange of a young man to live by himself down in the country. Made an ass of himself when he was a boy, doubtless—ashamed of it—proud of his family—the woman pensioned off. But what has all this to do with Miss Coquette? He can't have

been making love to her, for she is going to marry her cousin. Well, no matter; mysteries are best left alone—and so are other peoples' affairs. Shall it be sherry, sherry, sherry, or hock, hock, hock? Hic, hæc, hoc, and a hujus hunc of ham, as we used to say at school. Very bad joke, very bad, bad, bad—infernal!"

But Lady Drum was in no such careless mood; and very piteously Coquette had to beg of her not to make an exposure of the matter. Indeed, the girl besought her so earnestly that Lady Drum was driven into warm language to defend herself, and at last she used the word "infamous." Then Coquette rose up, quite pale and proud, and said—

"I am sorry you think that, Lady Drum. Why? Because I must go from your house. If he is infamous, I am infamous too, for I do not think he has done any wrong."

"Not done wrong!" cried the old lady. "Not done wrong! A married man who trifles wi' the affections of a young girl!"

"He did not do so," said Coquette, calmly. "It was a misfortune that happened to us both—that is all; you do not know how he has vexed himself about this—what he suffered before—how we had determined not to see each other again. Ah, you

do not understand it at all, if you think he is to blame. He is very miserable, that is what I know —that is enough for me to know; and if he has done wrong, I have too; and yet Lady Drum, if my mamma were here, I would go down on my knees before her, and I would tell her all about it from the first day at Airlie, and I do know she would not be angry with me for what I have done——."

Coquette turned away her head. Lady Drum went to her, and drew her nearer to her, and hid her head in her arms.

"You are very unfortunate, my poor girl—for you are fond of him yet, are you not?"

"Oh, Lady Drum!" she cried wildly, bursting into tears, "I do love him better than everything in the world—and I cannot help it—and now he is gone, I shall never see him again, neither here nor at Airlie, for he will not go back to Airlie—and all I wish now is that I might be dead, and not wake up morning after morning to think of him far away——."

"Hush, child!" said the old woman, gravely. "You do not know what these wild words mean. You must teach yourself not to think of him. It is a sin to think of him."

"But if I cannot help it," sobbed the girl; "if it

always comes back to me—all that happened at Airlie—and when we were sailing in the summer time—how can I help thinking of him, Lady Drum? It is hard enough if I do not see him—and I would like to see him only once, to say that I am sorry for him—and that, whatever people may say, I know, and I will remember, that he was a good man—and very gentle to me—and very kind to all people, as you know, Lady Drum."

"You must think less of him, and more of yourself, my girl," said the old lady, kissing her tenderly. "It is a misfortune that has fallen ower ye, as you say; but you are young yet, with plenty o' life and spirits in ye, and ye must determine to cure yourself o' an infatuation which is dangerous and mischievous. Coquette, what for do ye look like that? Are ye in a trance? Bestir yourself, my lassie—listen, listen, there is your cousin come, and he is talking to Sir Peter in the hall."

"My cousin?"

"Yes."

Coquette shuddered, and turned away her head.

"I cannot see him. Tell him, Lady Drum, I go back to Airlie to-morrow; and I will see him when he comes in the autumn—perhaps."

"Why do you say 'perhaps' like that, Coquette?"

"The autumn is a long way off, is it not? Perhaps he will not be able to see me; but I shall be at Airlie then; and perhaps I shall know that he has come in to the churchyard to look for me."

CHAPTER XIX.

A Legend of Earlshope.

It was a wild night at Airlie. The sea could be heard breaking with tremendous force all along the shore, and the wind that blew about the moor brought with it occasional heavy showers of rain. Occasionally, too, there were rifts in the clouds; and a white gleam of moonlight would shine out and down on the dark landscape. The villagers kept themselves snug and warm indoors, and were thankful they were not out at sea on such a night.

Earlshope was more sheltered; but if the house itself was not much shaken by the storm, its inmates would hear the moaning of the wind through the trees in the park, and the howling of the gusts that tore through the fir-wood lying over by the moor. The male servants had gone over to Greenock for some reason or other; and as the womenfolks did not like to be quite left alone, the Pensioner had consented to come over from Airlie and sleep in the house that night. But first of all, of

course, there was a general supper in the housekeeper's room; and then the Pensioner and the housekeeper and the two girls began to tell stories of old things that had happened in the neighbourhood. By-and-by that duty almost entirely devolved upon the Pensioner, who was known to be skilled in legends; and as he had also brought with him his fiddle, he set himself down generally to entertain the company, fortifying himself from time to time with a tumbler of whisky-toddy, which the housekeeper carefully replenished.

Somehow or other, as the night wore on, his stories and his music assumed a more and more sombre and even weird and wild tinge. Perhaps the howling of the wind in the chimneys, or the more distant sound of its wailing through the big trees in the park, lent an air of melancholy to the old ballads and legends he recited; but, at all events, the circle of listeners grew almost silent, and sat as if spell-bound. He no longer played "There grows a bonnie brier bush in our kailyard," but sang to them, in a quavering and yet plaintive voice, the story of Ellen of Strathcoe, who was rowed away over the lake when the moon was shining and the wind blowing lightly, but who never reached the shore. And then the old man came nearer to his own time, and told them of the awful

stories of second sight that he had heard when a boy, over among the Cowal hills—of warnings coming at the dead of the night—of voices heard in churchyards—of visions seen by persons in their own houses, as they sat alone in the evening. The girls listened partly to him, and partly to the wind without. The great house seemed to be even more empty than usual; and the creaking of a door or the shaking of a window could be heard along the corridors coming from distant rooms. Earlshope was a lonely place at that time of night—so far away from all houses, and so near to the wild moor.

"But there is no story about Earlshope," said one of the girls.

She spoke in a quite timid voice; as if she were listening to the sounds without.

"Wass you never told, then, o' sa auld man that lived here by himsel', and would ride about sa country at night, and drink by himsel' in such a faishion as no man leevin' would pelieve?"

They did not answer him: they only looked—their eyes grown apprehensive.

"It wass an auld Lord Earlshope, as I hef peen told, and he wass a wild man for sa drink; and no one in all sa country side would go near him. Sa bairns would flee from him as he came riding down

sa road, and he would ride at them, and frichten them, and gallop on wi' shrieks o' laughin', just as if he wass sa teefle himsel'. And he would ride about sa country at nicht, and knock at folk's doors or windows wi' his stick, and cry in till them, and then ride on again, wud wi' laughin' and singin', just as if he wass possessed. And sare wass a girl in Airlie—a bonnie young lassie she wass, as I hef peen told, and he did sweer on a Bible wis sa most dreadfu' sweerin', he would carry her some nicht to Earlshope, or else set sa house on fire over herself and her folk. And sa lassie—she was so frichtened she would never go outside sa house; and it wass said she wass to go to Greenock or to Glasgow into service—if sare was service then, for it wass a long time ago."

The Pensioner here bethought him of his toddy, and turned to his glass. During that brief pause there was a dead silence—only some laurel bushes rustled outside in the wind. The Pensioner cleared his throat and resumed his tale.

"And Lord Earlshope, as I hef peen told, did hear sat she would go away from Airlie, and he was in a great rage, and swore sat he would burn sa whole place down, and her too, and all her folk. But one day it wass known to him sat her parents would be over in Saltcoats; and he had men sare,

and sa men got hold of sa lassie's folk, and clapped them into a big boat, and took sem out to sea. And sa lassie waited all sa afternoon, and say did not come home; nor yet at nicht, and she was all by herself, for she wass afraid to go out and speer at sa neighbours. And then, as I hef peen told, he did go to sa house at sa dead o' nicht, and pulled sa lassie out, and took her on sa horse, and rode over wi' her to Earlshope—her screamin', him laughin' and sweerin', as wass his ordinar'. And so wild wass he wis sa drink, sat he ordered all sa servants out o' sa house, and sey listened frae the outside to sa awful noises in sa rooms—him ragin', and sweerin', and laughin', jist like sa teefle. And then, as I hef peen told, a licht was seen—and it grew—and it grew—and flames wass in all sa windows—and sare was a roarin', and a noise, and a burnin'—and when the mornin' wass come, Earlshope wass burned down to sa ground, and nothing could be seen o' sa lassie or sa auld man either."

The Pensioner took another pull at the tumbler. It was getting more and more late.

"And this, as I hef peen told, is a new Earlshope; but sa auld man hass never gone away from sa place. He is still about here in sa night-time, I do not know he hass been seen; but many's and many's sa time he wass heard to laugh in among

the trees in the park, and you will hear sometimes the sound of sa horses' feet not far from sa house. Trop, trop!—trop, trop!—sat is it—licht, licht—and you will not know whesser it is close by, or far away, only you will hear sa laughin' close by, as if it wass at your ear."

Suddenly at this moment a string of the Pensioner's fiddle snapped with a loud bang, and there was a simultaneous shriek from the women. In the strange pause that followed, when they all listened with a beating heart, it seemed to them that at some distance outside there was a measured beat on the soft earth, exactly like the sound of a horse riding up to Earlshope. A minute or two more and the suspicion became a certainty.

"Listen!" said one of the girls, instinctively seizing hold of her neighbour's arm. The wind was still moaning through the firs, but in the intervals the footfalls of the horse became more and more distinct, and were obviously drawing near to the house.

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed the Housekeeper, with a scared face, "wha can it be at this time o' nicht?"

"It is coming nearer," said another.

"Jeannie!" cried the third, in a frenzy of des-

peration, "dinna haud me by the airm—a body canna hear!"

The measured sounds drew nearer, until they ceased, apparently, at the very door. Then there was the sharp clink of the bell-handle on the stone, and far away in the hollow corridor of the kitchen a bell jingled hideously. The Housekeeper uttered a cry, and started to her feet.

"Gude forgi'e me, but there's no a Bible near at hand!" she exclaimed in an agony of trepidation. "Mr. Laumont, Mr. Laumont, what is to be done? This is fearfu'—this is awfu'! Jeannie, what for do ye no open the door?"

"Open the door?" said the girl, faintly, with her eyes staring out of her head.

"Ay, open the door!" said the Housekeeper savagely. "Isn't it your business?"

"But—but—but—" stammered the girl, with her teeth chattering, "n—no, to open the door to the deevil!"

"I will open sa door!" said the Pensioner, calmly.

When he rose and went into the dark hall the women followed close at his heels, all clinging to each other. Another vigorous pull at the bell had nearly brought them to their knees; but Neil Laumont, groping his way to the door, began to

fumble about for the bolts, using much florid and unnecessary Gaelic all the while. At last the bolts were withdrawn, and the door opened. On the threshold stood the dusky figure of a man; beyond him the horse from which he had dismounted, and which he held by the bridle. The women shrank back in affright—one of them uttering a piercing scream. The Pensioner stood for a moment irresolute, and then he advanced a step, and said, with a fine assumption of courage—

"Who sa teefle are you, and what for you will come to disturb a good and a godly house? What is it sat you want?"

"Confound you, send somebody to take my horse!" was the sharp reply he met with from the mysterious stranger. "What's the matter? Is there no one about the place but a pack of frightened women?"

"It is his Lordship himsel'!" cried Neil. "Eh, wha did expect to see you sa nicht?"

"Come and take my horse, you fool!"

"Sat I will; but it is no use calling names," answered Neil, while the women began to breathe.

The Pensioner got the keys of the stable, and led off the horse, while Lord Earlshope entered the hall, called for lights, and began to rub the rain out of his eyes and hair. The whole house was

presently in a scurry to have his Lordship's wants attended to; but there was considerable delay, for none of the women would go singly on the shortest errand. When, after some time, Neil returned from feeding and grooming the horse in a rough and ready fashion, he infused some little courage into the household; and at length the turmoil caused by the unexpected arrival subsided somewhat. Finally, Lord Earlshope called the Housekeeper into his study, and said to her—

"I shall leave early to-morrow morning. There have been no visitors at Earlshope recently?"

"No, your Lordship."

"It is very likely that a woman—a Mrs. Smith Arnold she calls herself—will come here to-morrow and ask to be shown over the place. You will on no account allow her to come into the house,—you understand?"

"But wha can come here the morn?" said the Housekeeper; "it's the Sabbath."

"This person may drive here. In any case, you will allow no stranger to come into the place."

"I wish the men folks were coming back afore Monday," said the Housekeeper, who was still a trifle perturbed by the Pensioner's stories.

"Cannot three of you keep one woman from

coming into the house? You can lock the doors—you need not even talk to her."

Having received her instructions, the Housekeeper left; and Lord Earlshope went to a writing desk, and addressed an envelope to a firm of solicitors in London. The words he then wrote and enclosed in the envelope were merely these—"*Reserve payment to Mrs. Smith Arnold, if demanded. The stipulations have not been observed. I will call on you in a few days.—Earlshope.*"

It was close on midnight when he entered the house; and shortly after daybreak next morning he had again set out, telling no one of his intentions. The servants, accustomed to his abrupt comings and goings, were not surprised; but none of them forgot the manner in which Lord Earlshope had ridden up at midnight to the house in the fashion of his notorious ancestor. As for the Housekeeper, she was more consequential than ever, having been intrusted with a secret.

CHAPTER XX.

The Minister's Publisher.

On the morning of the day on which Lord Earlshope paid this sudden visit to Airlie, the Minister came down into the parlour of the Manse, where Leezibeth was placing the breakfast things.

"Miss Cassilis is coming home to-day," he said.

"Atweel, I'm glad to hear't," said Leezibeth, uttering that peculiar sigh of resignation with which most elderly Scotchwomen receive good news.

The boys were all rejoiced to hear that Coquette was coming, for they had not forgotten the presents she had promised them, and they knew from of old that she was as little likely to forget. This being Saturday, and a wet Saturday, too, they unanimously resolved to stay at home, and play at "bools" in the lobby until Coquette should arrive from Glasgow. But the restraint of this form of

amusement became insufferable. Leezibeth's remonstrances about their noise—the Minister being then engaged with his sermon—at last drove them out of the house and up into the hay-loft, where they had unlimited freedom of action and voice.

Leezibeth delivered to Andrew the necessary orders about the dog-cart in a somewhat defiant way—she knew he would not regard very favourably the return of the young lady. But Andrew kept most of his grumbling to himself; and Leezibeth only overheard the single word "Jezebel."

"Jezebel!" she cried, in a sudden flame of anger. "Wha is Jezebel? Better Jezebel than Shimei the Benjamite, that will be kenned for ever only by his ill-temper and his ill-tongue."

Leezibeth stood there, as if daring him to say another word. Andrew was a prudent man. He began to tie his shoe, and as he stooped he only muttered—

"'Hm! If Shimei had had a woman's tongue, David micht hae suffered waur. And it's an ill time come to us if we are a' to bend the knee to this foreign woman, that can scarcely be spoken o' withoot offence. Better for us a' if the Minister's brither had been even like Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim. As it was said o' him, 'I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where

ye were not born, and there shall ye die. But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.'"

"Od, I wish Maister Tammas could hear ye!" said Leezibeth, in desperation at being out-talked.

"Ay, ay, Maister Tammas, it was an ill day for him that she came to the Manse. Mark my words, the Minister 'll repent him o't when he sees his auldest son a wreck and a ruin, and a by-word i' the country-side. He'll turn aside from his ain folk, Leezibeth, and marry ane o' the daughters o' Heth."

"What for no?" cried Leezibeth. "Where could he wale out a bonnier lass? I wish ye'd stop yer yaumering, and look oot some plaids and rugs for the dog-cairt, for there's wind and rain enough to last us for the rest o' the year."

A very surly man was Andrew Bogue when he set out at mid-day to drive over to the station. He was enveloped so that only the tip of his nose could be seen; for the wind was dashing heavy showers over the moor, and the sea was white with the breaking of the great waves. It was not a day to improve a man's temper; and when, at last, Coquette arrived, Andrew was not the most pleasant person to bid her welcome.

Coquette was alone. Sir Peter was for accom-

panying her on the brief railway journey; but she would not hear of it, as she knew that the dog-cart would await her arrival. Coquette came out into the little station. She asked Andrew to get her luggage; and while he was gone she turned and looked up to the high country beyond which Airlie lay. How dismal it looked! The wind was moving heavy masses of dull grey cloud across the sky, and between her and the gloomy landscape hovered the mist of the rain, underneath which the trees drooped, and the roads ran red. She could not see the sea; but the tumbling plain of sombre waves would not have brightened the scene much. And so at last she took her seat on the dog-cart, and hid herself in thick shawls and rugs, and so was driven away through the dripping and desolate country. It was so different from her first coming thither!

"They are all well at Airlie?" she said.

"Weel aneuch," said Andrew; and that was all the conversation which passed between them on the journey.

They drew near Earlshope, and Coquette saw the entrance to the park, and the great trees standing desolately in the rain. There was the strip of fir-wood, too, near which she had parted with Lord Earlshope but a short time ago, on that pleasant summer morning. The place looked familiar, and

yet unfamiliar. The firs were almost black under the heavy rain-clouds, and there was no living creature abroad to temper the loneliness and desolation of the moor which stretched beyond. It seemed to Coquette that she was now coming back to a prison, in which she must spend the rest of her life. Hitherto all had been uncertainty as to her future, and she had surrendered herself to the new and sweet experiences of the moment with scarcely a thought. But now all the past had been shut up as if it were a sealed book, and there remained to her —what? Coquette began to think that she had seen the best of life, and that she would soon feel old.

She went into the Manse. It did not look a cheerful place just then. Outside, rain and cold; inside, the wind had blown the smoke down one of the chimneys, and the atmosphere of the house was a dull blue. But Leezibeth came running to meet her, and overwhelmed her with fussy kindness about her wet clothes, and hurried her upstairs, and provided her with warm slippers, and what not, until Coquette —who had abandoned herself into her hands—became aware that she was ungratefully silent about those little attentions.

"You are very kind to me, Leesiebess," she said.

"'Deed no, I'm fair delighted to see ye back, miss," said Leezibeth, "for the Manse has been like

a kirkyaird since the day ye left it. The Minister has been shut up in the study frae mornin' till nicht —the laddies at the schule, and that cantankerous auld man grumbling until a body's life was like to be worried out. And I'm thinking Glasgow doesna agree wi' ye, miss. Ye are looking a wee bit worn and pale; but running about the moor will soon set ye up again."

"It is not pleasant to go on the moor now," said Coquette, with a little shrug, as she looked out of the window on the desolate prospect.

"But it canna be aye rainin'—though it seems to try sometimes," said Leezibeth. "I wish it had been ordained that we should get nae mair weet than the farmers want—it is just a wastery o' the elements to hae rain pourin' down like that."

Then Coquette began to inquire why her uncle had not come to see her; and Leezibeth explained that the Minister was fairly buried alive in his books ever since he had began seriously to work at his Concordance. So she ran downstairs, and went into the study, and went up to him and dutifully kissed him.

The Minister looked up with dazed eyes, and a pleased look came into the sad grey face.

"You have come back, my girl? And you are well? And you have enjoyed yourself in Glasgow?"

He failed to notice the somewhat tired air that had not escaped Leezibeth's keen eyes.

"You have been hard at work, uncle, I can see; and I am come back to interrupt it."

"Why?" said the Minister, in some alarm.

"Because I cannot let you kill yourself with your books. When the weather does become fine again, you will go out with me, and leave your books alone for a time."

"I cannot do that," he said looking at the sheets before him. "I have purposed having this work finished by the end o' the year, so that, if I am spared and in health, I might even undertake another with the incoming o' the new year. But sometimes I fear my labour will be thrown away. I am not familiar wi' the booksellers and such persons as undertake to bring out new works. The expense of it would be far too great for my own means, and yet I do not know how to recommend it to the notice of those whose business it is to embark money in such enterprises. I do not desire any profit or proceeds from the sale of the work, but I am not sufficiently acquainted with such things to know whether that will be an inducement. The cost of bringing out such a work must be great—Mr. Gillespie, the Schoolmaster, did even mention so large

a sum as one hundred pounds, but I am afraid not with sufficient caution or knowledge."

Coquette knelt down beside the old man, and took his hand in both of hers.

"Uncle," she said, "I am going to ask you for a great favour."

"And what is it?"

"No, you must promise first."

"It is impossible—it is contrary to the teaching of Scripture to promise what it may be impossible to perform," said the Minister, who was perhaps vaguely influenced by the story of the daughter of Herodias.

"Ah, well, it does not matter. Uncle, I want you to let me be your publisher."

"What do you mean, Catherine?"

"Let me publish your book for you. You know my papa did leave me some money—it is useless to me—I do nothing with it—it becomes more and more every year, and does nothing for anybody. This would be an amusement for me. I will take your book, uncle; and you shall have no more of bother with it, and I will get it printed, and my Cousin Tom—he will send me word how the people do buy it in Glasgow."

"But—but—but—," stammered the Minister, who could scarcely understand at first this astounding

proposal, "my child, this generosity you propose might entail serious loss, which I should feel more than if it were my own. It is a grave matter, this publishing of a book—it is one that young people cannot understand, and is not lightly to be undertaken. We will put aside this offer of yours, Catherine——"

"No, uncle, you must not," she said, gently, as she rose and put her hand on his shoulder. And then she drooped her head somewhat, as if in shame, and said to him in a low voice, quite close to his ear, "If my mamma were here, she would do it for you, uncle, and so you must let me."

And then she kissed him again, and went away to call the boys, who were rather anxiously awaiting that summons. They were taken up to her sitting-room, and thither also came Leezibeth, partly to preserve order, and partly to open one of Coquette's boxes, which was placed on a side-table. Coquette, by this time, had plucked up her spirits a little bit. The fire was burning more brightly in the room, and Leezibeth had prepared some tea for her. And so, when this box was finally opened, she proceeded to display its contents in the fashion of a small show-woman; delivering a grave lecture to the circle of boys, who looked on as hungry-eyed as hawks. That decorum did not last long. In a very little

while there was a turmoil in the room, and boyish shrieks of laughter over Coquette's ironical jokes went pealing all over the house. For she had brought this for that cousin, and that for the other one; and there was a great deal of blushing, and of confused thanks, and of outrageous merriment over the embarrassment of the others. Coquette seemed to have purchased an inexhaustible store of presents; and what astonished them more than all was the exceeding appropriateness and exceptional value of those gifts.

"Look here, Coquette," said Dugald, "who told you I lost that knife with the corkscrew and the gimlet, and the file in it—for this ane is jist the same?"

"Look here, Dugald," remarked the young lady, standing before him. "Will you please to tell me how you addressed me just now?"

"Oh," said Dugald, boldly, "the Whaup never called ye anything else, and ye seemed well enough pleased."

Here there was a good deal of laughter at Coquette's expense; for these young gentlemen had formed their own notion of the relation between their brother and Coquette.

"Then," she said, "when you are as tall as the

Whaup, and as respectful to me as he is, you may call me Coquette; but not till then, Master Dugald."

In the midst of all this confusion and noise, a sudden lull occurred. Coquette turned and saw the tall, spare figure of her uncle at the half-opened door, where he had been for some time an unperceived and amused spectator of the proceedings. One or two of the boys had caught sight of him, and had instantly curbed their wild merriment. But even although this was Saturday, it was clear the Minister was not in an impatient mood with their uproar. On the contrary, he walked into the room, and over to Coquette, and put his hand affectionately on her head.

"You are a very good girl, Catherine," he said.

The boys looked on this demonstration of kindliness with the utmost surprise. Seldom, indeed, had they seen their father forget that rigour of demeanour which the people in many parts of Scotland retain as the legacy of Puritanical reticence in all matters of the feelings and emotions. And then the compliment he paid to her!

"I hope you are not being troubled by those unruly boys, who have much to learn in manners," said the Minister, with a good-natured gravity. "But Leezibeth must see to that; and so, since you are come home, Catherine, I begin to think I should

like to hear the sound of music again. I think the Manse has not been quite so cheerful since you left, somehow; and I have missed you much in the evenings. As for music, I have had occasion lately to notice how much King David was in the habit of speaking about music, and about musical instruments, and the singing of the voice. Perhaps we in this country have an unwarrantable prejudice against music—an exercise that we know the chosen people of the Lord prized highly."

It was now Leezibeth's turn to be astonished. To hear the Minister ask for music on a Saturday —the day of his studying the sermon; and to hear him disagree with the estimation in which that godless pastime was held by all decent, sober-minded, responsible folk, were matter for deep reflection to her, and not a little alarm and pain. Yet in her secret heart she was not sorry that Coquette sat down to the piano. Had she dared, she would have asked her to sing one of the old Scotch songs that had first drawn her towards the young French girl.

But Coquette, also remembering that it was Saturday, began to play "Drumclog," and the beating of the wind and rain without was soon lost in the solemn and stately harmonies of that fine old air. And then, as in days gone by, she played it

sharply and triumphantly; and a thrill went through the Minister's heart. He drew his chair nearer to the piano, and heard the close of the brief performance with a sigh.

"Catherine," he said, rather absently, "was there not a song you used to sing about returning to your home after being away from it for a time? It was a French song, I think; and yet the music of it seemed to me praiseworthy."

"I do know that song," said Coquette, in a low voice. "But — but — I cannot sing it any more."

The Minister did not notice the pain that was visible on her face.

"Yet perhaps you remember the music sufficiently to play it on the instrument without the help of the voice," said the grey-haired old man— apparently forgetting altogether that Leezibeth and the boys were in the room.

Coquette began to play the air. It was the song that told of the happy return to France after three long years of absence. She had returned to her home, it is true—leaving behind her many wild, and sad, and beautiful memories; and now that she was back to Airlie, it seemed as though the desolate wind and the rain outside were but typical of the life that awaited her there. Coquette played

the air as if she were in a dream; and, at last, her cousin Dugald, standing at the end of the piano, was surprised to see her face get more and more bent down, and her fingering of the keys more and more uncertain.

"What for are ye greetin'?" he said to her, gently; but Coquette could make no answer.

CHAPTER XXI.

An Apparition.

COQUETTE had never got accustomed to the depressing stillness and gloom of the Sabbath as it was kept at Airlie; and on this, the first morning of what seemed to be the beginning of a new era of her life, she almost feared what she would have to encounter. She dreaded the death-like silence of the morning, the sombre procession of the people to church, the sharp, imperative jangle of the bell, and then the long, drowsy, monotonous day spent indoors, with the melancholy sound of Leezibeth reading aloud to herself in the kitchen. Once, as she lay ill, she talked to Leezibeth about the pleasant Sundays she had learnt to love in her youth—the cheerful gathering of friends and acquaintances at the small chapel in the early morning—the touching music—the solemn lights in the recesses of the building—then out into the clear air again, and home to meet all manner of relatives and friends who had come to spend a quiet holiday. Against all this, Leezibeth naturally protested strongly; and

even warmed into poetic language, as elderly Scotch-women will, who have been familiar all their life with the picturesque phraseology of the Bible.

"It is the day set apart," she said,—"it is the day of the Lord; and He walks about on that day, and looks at all that He has made, as it was efter a new creation."

"And are you afraid of Him," said Coquette, as she lay half-dreaming on the sofa; "are you afraid of Him, that you all keep indoors on that day, and scarce speak to each other, and let no sound be heard?"

On this particular morning the earth itself seemed steeped in gloom. The storm had so far abated that the trees no longer bent before the wind, and there was no rain. But overhead and stretching far down to the horizon was a pall of thick, lurid, steel-blue cloud; and the mountains of Arran threw sombre shadows deep down into the cold grey of the sea. The fir woods near at hand seemed almost black; those on the slopes going southward lay as a series of dusky and indistinguishable patches on the misty greys and greens of the landscape. The road going down the moor had been washed red; and the rapid and drumly stream had overflown its narrow banks.

The boys were all in their Sunday clothes, and

were secretly caressing in their pockets all the time of family worship the presents Coquette had brought them from Glasgow. Leezibeth was particular that Coquette should put on thick boots, as the roads were so wet; and in time, after much hurrying, and whispering, and admonition, they all set out for church.

It was a cheerless day, cold and damp, and the wind had a raw feeling about it. The cracked bell of the old church was pealing out its summons, and up from Airlie came the struggling and solemn procession of people, seemingly afraid to speak to each other, nearly all of them dressed in stiff and ungainly black clothes. Fortunately for Coquette, she was overtaken by an old friend of hers, and she welcomed him gladly, for she knew that he would talk to her even to the church door. It was the Pensioner.

"And I wass told you would pe pack, Miss Cassilis," said Neil, "and richt glad was I to hear't; and how is it that you will like Glasgow?"

"I did like it very much," said Coquette.

"Oh, it is sa grand place—but you will need to know where to go for sa goot whisky before you will go to Glasgow."

Coquette hinted that she had not discovered the pet public-house that Neil evidently had in his

mind's eye, whereupon the old Highlandman was profuse and earnest in his apologies—he had not "meant it was for sa likes o' her to think o' a public-house," and so forth.

Just at this moment, when the party from the Manse had nearly reached the path across the moor to the church, and were therefore on the point of joining the slow stream of people that came up from the village, the noise of a carriage was heard behind them. Instantly all the faces of the people were turned. Such a sound had rarely indeed been heard at Airlie on a Sunday morning; and there was a manifest lingering on the moorland road to see who this might be that was outraging the solemn and decorous gravity of the Sabbath.

Coquette, the Pensioner, Leezibeth, and the boys, stepped to one side, to let the carriage pass. But it had not passed them, when the loud voice of a woman was heard ordering the driver to pull up. The vehicle, indeed, stopped close by the party from the Manse; and Coquette, looking up, saw to her astonishment and dismay that she was confronted by the woman who had walked up to Lord Earlshope and her in the park.

"What! The little Italian princess!" cried the woman, with her bold, black eyes fixed on the girl with a look of impudent merriment. "So this is

where you come from, is it? Here, won't you shake hands with me?"

She sat round in the carriage, and put her hand over the side. Coquette shrank back a step, and inadvertently caught hold of Neil's arm.

"She is afraid of me," said the woman in the carriage to her companion—another woman, less gaudily dressed, who sat on the opposite side of the carriage. "She cuts me. Our country beauties are proud. But you were not born and bred in this desolate hole, were you?" she added, addressing Coquette.

The girl was too much alarmed to reply. The whole scene was visible to the people, who made no pretence of walking on to the church, but stopped and stared at the strange spectacle of a bold, red-faced, impudent woman addressing the Minister's niece, and breaking the stillness of the Sabbath morning, with her loud talking and her indecent laughter.

The scene only lasted for a couple of seconds, however. The Pensioner walked boldly up to the side of the carriage, and said—

"What is it you will want wis sa Minister's niece?"

For reply, he got a handful of raisins and almonds tossed into his face; and then, with another shriek of laughter, in which her companion joined, the woman called aloud to her coachman—

"Drive on to Earlshope."

"To Earlshope!" whispered the villagers among themselves; and then they looked at Coquette, who, pale and yet apparently self-possessed, had crossed into the path with Leezibeth, and was already walking slowly towards the church.

For an instant or two the Pensioner stood looking at the retreating carriage, his whole frame trembling with rage at the insult he received. Of the rapid Gaelic he uttered there and then, it was fortunate the villagers could overhear or understand but little. Then, with a proud and dignified air, he drew up his shoulders, and marched in military fashion after Coquette, whom he overtook.

"Earlshope! Earlshope!" said the old man, puffing and snorting with indignation. "It will be no Earlshope she will see sa day. Oh, I will know all apout it. We wass warned—and when his Lordship did ride away this morning, his last words was apout this leddy that might be for coming to look at sa house."

"Was Lord Earlshope here this morning?" said Coquette, quickly.

The Pensioner was startled to find what he had done. In his indignation, he had told not only what he knew himself, but also that which had been given him as a profound secret by the Housekeeper.

Never in his life before had he been so indiscreet; and in his perplexity and alarm he made wild and desperate efforts to recover the ownership of these mysteries.

"No, no, no!" he said, hurriedly, and with every token of vexation. "It will pe all nonsense that sa woman has put into my head. His Lordship at Earlshope? He hassna been sare for many and many's sa day, as sure as I will pe porn!"

The Pensioner gave this last assurance with a downcast head and in a sort of anxious whisper; for they were now near the church door, where outspoken lies might be dangerous cattle to meddle with. Coquette's calm eyes looked at the old man, and saw his perturbation. She perceived that he had unintentionally revealed a secret. Lord Earlshope had left the neighbourhood only that morning; and with that, and this wild escapade of his wife to think over—even if she had nothing of her own to trouble her mind—she entered the small building. For a moment she could not help thinking that if, instead of listening to the harsh psalm-singing, she could have gone away and knelt down all by herself in one of the small, twilight recesses in a certain little chapel on the Loire, she would have been happy. It would have been to her like bending down once more at her mother's knee.

CHAPTER XXII.

Earlshope is invaded.

MEANWHILE the carriage had been driven to the gates of Earlshope. The Lodgekeeper came out, and naturally opened the gates, although sufficiently surprised to see anybody arrive at such a time. When, at last, it stood before the stone-steps of the house, the occupants got out. The Housekeeper was already standing there, in front of the open door, glaring defiance.

The first of the two women walked up the steps in a slow and pompous fashion, and, with an air of mock-heroic gravity, handed her a card, on which was printed *Mrs. Smith Arnold.*

"'Deed no!" said the Housekeeper, rather incoherently.

Mrs. Arnold looked at her companion, and shrugged her shoulders.

"My good woman, I suppose you can't read. That is not a begging letter. It is a card. I have the permission of Lord Earlshope to look over the house—I don't mean to steal anything, but you may come with us wherever we go, if you please."

The Housekeeper began to wax warm.

"Canna read! I can read weel aneugh; and what I say is, that not one step into this house will ye gang the day, his Lordship's permission or no permission."

"What do you mean, woman?" said Mrs. Arnold, with a fine assumption of haughtiness.

"I mean what I say," said the Scotchwoman, doggedly. "And I havena been kept frae the kirk a' for nothing, as ye'll find out, gin ye attempt ony o' your fine airs wi' me."

These latter words were spoken rather hotly, and both the women who stood before her looked surprised. However, the *soi-disant* Mrs. Arnold picked up some temper, and merely exclaiming—"Oh, the creature's mad!" brushed past her into the house, along with her companion. Lord Earlshope's plenipotentiary was at once stupefied and powerless. In order to avoid a public scandal on the Sabbath morning, she had sent the other servants to church, confident that her own authority would be sufficient to repulse any curious visitors. Now she found the house invaded by two strange women, and she was placed in an awkward dilemma. If she went through the house with them, she would condone their offence, and be unable to oust

them; if she went for help to the lodge, they, in the meantime, might pillage and plunder in every direction. She followed them.

She gradually perceived that they were not thieves. Indeed, Mrs. Smith Arnold betrayed a singular acquaintance with many objects in the house, particularly in a small drawing-room or morning-room which Lord Earlshope was scarcely ever known to enter.

"But where is my portrait?" she said.

"*Your* portrait!" repeated the Housekeeper, with all her indignation welling up again.

"Woman, you are an ass—a microcephalous idiot in fact, but you don't know it, and it is no matter. He might have brought my portrait here; it is a dull hole, and it might have cheered him. And this is the place he used to talk about with something like rapture! Good heavens! it is dismal as a church. Look at the deserted country and the bare shore and the black sea. What's the name of those mountains out there?"

"Ye had better ask them," said the Housekeeper, "since ye can make free enough to come into a strange house, and talk as if everything belonged to ye."

"And so it does—so it does; that is the joke of it. You would understand it if you were not such

an ass, my good woman; but I am afraid you are a very stupid person."

"Are ye going to leave this house?" said the Housekeeper, in a blaze of anger.

But the temper of the Housekeeper was nothing to the sudden passion that shot into the black eyes of this woman, as she said,

"Don't talk to me! I tell you, don't talk to me, or I will dash a bottle of vitriol in your face, and blind you, blind you, blind you!"

Then she burst into an ironical laugh.

"What a fool you are—an ass—an idiot! You haven't got the brains of a slow-worm. My good woman, believe me, you are an ass."

She began to turn over the things on the table —books, photographs, cards, and what not. The Housekeeper started and listened. There was a sound of footsteps on the stair. In a minute or two, the Pensioner made his appearance at the door, tall and erect.

At the sight of this ally, all the Housekeeper's courage and anger returned. She denounced the strangers as thieves and pick-pockets. She appealed to the Pensioner to help her. She conjured him to turn them out of the house.

"Sat is what I will do," observed Neil, advanc-

ing calmly, with the sort of deferential and yet firm air of the private soldier.

"Please, mem, will ye go, or will I pit ye oot o' sa house?"

"Lay a finger on me, and I will set fire to the place, and burn you and it into cinders. Savages that you are—and idiots!"

"You will say what you please," observed Neil, who probably considered these phrases as rather feeble when compared with some that he knew in his native tongue; "but I mean to put ye both oot o' sa house. I will not strike you—Cootness knaws; but I will jist tek ye up, one by one, and carry ye down sa stairs, and out into sa gairden, and leave ye there. Will ye go, or will ye not go?"

"Do you know who I am, you idiot?" cried the woman, with her face grown purple with passion.

Her companion laid her hand on her arm; she shook her off.

"I do not care," said the Pensioner.

"I am Lady Earlshope, you ignorant brutes and beasts!" she cried. "And I will have every one of you starved until a crow would not pick your eyes out, and I'll have you whipped, and starved, you ignorant hounds!"

"Lady Earlshope!" said the Housekeeper, rather falling back.

The quieter of the two women again interposed and endeavoured to pacify her companion. She, indeed, seemed rather frightened. Eventually, however, she managed to get her infuriated mistress coaxed out of the room and down the stair; and as they were going down, they nearly stumbled over a third occupant of the house—the Lodgekeeper, who, knowing that the Housekeeper was alone, had come up to see if he could be of assistance.

"Who are you?" she asked. "Oh, I remember. I suppose you have been listening. Well, you can go and tell your babbling neighbours of the reception Lady Earlshope met with in her own house."

This is precisely what the man did. He had overheard much of the stormy scene in the drawing-room, and, being of a prudent disposition, did not wish to have anything to do with it. When the carriage drove off, he went back to the lodge, leaving the Housekeeper and the Pensioner under the delusion that they alone knew the relationship of this woman to Lord Earlshope. But the Lodgekeeper revealed the secret, in an awe-stricken way, to his wife, who whispered it, in profound confidence, to one of the female servants, who told it to her mother in the village.

There it ran the round, with such exaggerations and comments as may be imagined; and if Co-

quette had been looked on rather askance from the moment of her coming to Airlie, this news placed her under the ban of a definite suspicion, and even horror. What were her relations with the drunken and passionate woman who had accosted her, in the open face of day, on that memorable Sabbath morning? What was the meaning of her intimacy with Lord Earlshope, and the cause of his visits to the Manse ever since she had come to live there?

Even the children caught the fever of distrust, and avoided Coquette. That would have been a bitter thing for her to bear, had she noticed it; but she was perhaps too much occupied then with her own sad thoughts. Nor was the Minister aware that his own conduct in harbouring this girl was forming the subject of serious remark in the village. The excuses made for him were in themselves accusations. He was withdrawn from worldly affairs. He was engrossed in his books. He was liable to be imposed on. All this was said; but none the less was it felt that the duty of looking sharply after the conduct of his household and the persons around him was specially incumbent on one whose business it was to see narrowly to the interests of the Church, and set an example to his Christian brethren.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Coquette's Song.

For a long period Coquette's life at Airlie was so uneventful that it may be passed over with the briefest notice. It seemed to her that she had passed through that season of youth and spring-time when romance and the wild joys of anticipation ought to colour for a brief time the atmosphere round a human life as if with rainbows. That was all over—if, indeed, it had ever occurred to her. There was now but the sad, grey monotony, the passing weeks and months in this remote moorland place, where the people seemed hard, unimpressionable, unfriendly. She began to acquire notions of duty. She began to devise charitable occupations for herself. She even began to study various things which could never by any chance be of use to her. And she grew almost to love the slow, melancholy droning by the old Scotch folk of those desolating passages in the Prophets which told of woe and wrath and the swift end of things, or which, still

more appropriately, dealt with the vanity of life, and the shortness of man's days.

The Whaup began to talk of marriage—she put it farther and farther off. He seldom indeed came to Airlie; for Dr. Menzies had been better than his promise—accepted him as junior partner—and was gradually entrusting a good deal of the business to his care. The Whaup's studies were far from complete; so that he had plenty to occupy himself with, and his visits to Airlie were few and brief. On one of these visits he said to his cousin—

"Coquette, you are growing very like a Scotch girl."

"Why?" she asked.

"In manner I mean; not in appearance. You are not as demonstrative as you used to be. You appear more settled, prosaic, matter-of-fact. You have lost all your old childish caprices; and you no longer appear to be so pleased with every little thing that happens. You are much graver than you used to be."

"Do you think so?" she said, absently.

"But when we are married I mean to take you away from this slow place, and introduce you to lots of pleasant people, and brighten you up into the old Coquette."

"I am very content to be here," she said, quietly.

"Content! Is that all you ask for? Content! I suppose a nun is content with a stone cell six feet square. But you were not intended to be content; you must be delighted, and you shall be delighted. Coquette, you never laugh now."

"And you," she said, "you are grown much serious too."

"Oh, well," he said, "I have such a deal to think about. One has to drop robbing people's gardens some day or rather."

"I have some things to think about also," she said—"not always to make me laugh."

"What troubles you, then, Coquette?" he asked gently.

"Oh, I cannot be asked questions, and questions always," she said, with a trace of fretful impatience, which was a startling surprise to him. "I have much to do in the village, with the children —and the parents, they do seem afraid of me."

The Whaup regarded her silently, with rather a pained look in his face; and then she, looking up, seemed to become aware that she had spoken harshly. She put her hand on his hand, and said—

"You must not be angry with me, Tom. I do

often find myself getting vexed, I do not know why; and I ask myself, if I do stay long enough at Airlie, whether I shall become like Leesibeth and her husband."

"You shall not stay long enough to try," said the Whaup, cheerfully.

Then he went away up to Glasgow, determined to work day and night to achieve this fair prospect. Sometimes he thought, when he heard his fellow-students tell of their gay adventures with their sweethearts, that his sweetheart, in bidding him good-bye, had never given him one kiss. And each time that he went down to Airlie, Coquette seemed to him to be growing more and more like the beautiful and sad Madonnas of early Italian art, and he scarce dared to think of kissing her.

So the days went by, and the slow, humdrum life of Airlie crept through the seasons, bringing the people a little nearer to the churchyard up on the moor that had received their fathers and their forefathers. The Minister worked away with a wistful earnestness at his Concordance on the Psalms; and had the pride of a young author in thinking of its becoming a real, bound book with the opening of the new year. Coquette went systematically and gravely about her charitable works in the village, and took no notice of the ill-favour with

which her efforts were regarded. All that summer and winter Earlshope remained empty.

One evening, in the beginning of the new year, Mr. Gillespie the Schoolmaster came up to the Manse, and was admitted into the study, where Coquette and her uncle sat together, busy with an array of proof-sheets. The Schoolmaster had a communication to make. Mr. Cassilis, enjoying the strange excitement and responsibility of correcting the sheets of a work which would afterwards bear his name, was forced to beg the Schoolmaster to be brief; and he, thus goaded, informed them, after a short preamble, that Earlshope was to be sold.

The Schoolmaster was pleased with the surprise which his news produced. Indeed, he had come resolved to watch the effect of these tidings upon the Minister's niece, so that he might satisfy his mind of her being in secret collusion with the young Lord of Earlshope; and he now glared at her through his gold spectacles. She had started on hearing the intelligence—so that she was evidently unacquainted with it; and yet she showed no symptoms of regret over an event which clearly betokened Lord Earlshope's final withdrawal from the country.

"A strange, even an unaccountable thing, it may

be termed," observed the Schoolmaster, "inasmuch as his Lordship was no spendthrift, and had more money than could satisfy all his wants or necessities, as one might say. Yet he has aye been a singular young man—which may have been owing, or caused by, certain circumstances or relationships of which you have doubtless heard, Mr. Cassilis."

"I have heard too much of the vain talking of the neighbourhood about his Lordship and his affairs," said the Minister, impatiently turning to his proofs.

"I will venture to say, Mr. Cassilis," remarked the Schoolmaster, who was somewhat nettled, "that it is no vain talking, as no one has been heard to deny that he is a married man."

"Dear me!" said the Minister, looking up. "Of what concern is it to either you or me, Mr. Gillespie, whether he is a married man or not?"

The Schoolmaster was rather stunned. He looked at Coquette. She sat apparently unimpressionable and still. He heaved a sigh, and shook his head; and then he rose.

"It is the duty o' a Christian—which I humbly hope that I am, sir,—no' to think ill of his neighbours; but I confess, Mr. Cassilis, ye go forward a length in that airt, or direction, I might term it rather, which is surprising."

The Minister rose also.

"Let me see you through the passage, Mr. Gillespie, which is dark at these times. I do not claim for myself, however, any especial charity in this matter; for I would observe that it is not always to a man's disfavour to believe him married."

As the passage was in reality exceedingly dark, the Schoolmaster could not tell whether there was in the Minister's eye a certain humorous twinkle which he had sometimes observed there, and which, to tell the truth, he did not particularly like, for it generally accompanied a severe rebuke. However, the Schoolmaster had done his duty. The Minister was warned; and if any of his household were led astray, the village of Airlie could wash its hands of the matter.

At last there came people to make Earlshope ready for the auctioneer's hammer; and then there was a great sale, and the big house was gutted and shut up. But neither it nor the estate was sold; though strangers came from time to time to look at both.

Once more the quiet moorland neighbourhood returned to its quiet ways; and Coquette went the round of her simple duties, lessening day by day the vague prejudice which had somehow been stirred up against her. It was with no such inten-

tion, certainly, that she laboured; it was enough if the days passed, and if the Whaup were content to cease writing for a definite answer about that marriage which was yet far away in the future. Leezibeth looked on this new phase of the girl's character with an esteem and approval tempered by something like awe. She could not tell what had taken away from her all the old gaiety, and wilfulness, and carelessness. Strangely enough, too, Leezibeth was less her confidante now; and on the few occasions that Lady Drum came over to Airlie the old lady was surprised to find Coquette grown almost distant and reserved in manner. Indeed, the girl was as much alone there as if she had been afloat on a raft at sea. All hope of change, of excitement, of pleasure, seemed to have left her. She seldom opened the piano; and, when she did, "Drumclog" was no longer a martial air, but a plaintive wail of grief.

Perhaps, of all the people around her, the one that noticed most of her low spirits was the Whaup's young brother Dugald, of whom she had made a sort of pet. Very often she took him with her on her missions into the village, or her walks into the country round. And one day, as they were sitting on the moor, she said to him—

"I suppose you never heard of an old German

song that is very strange and sad? I wonder if I can remember the words and repeat them to you. They are something like this—

Three horsemen rode out to the gate of the town: Good-bye!
Fine-Sweetheart, she looked from her window down: Good-bye!
And if ill fate such grief must bring,
Then reach me hither your golden ring!
Good-bye! Good-bye! Good-bye!
Ah, parting wounds so bitterly!

And it is Death that parts us so: Good-bye!
Many a rose-red maiden must go: Good-bye!
He sunders many a man from wife:
They knew how happy a thing was life.
Good-bye! Good-bye! Good-bye!
Ah, parting wounds so bitterly!

He steals the infant out of its bed: Good-bye!
And when shall I see my nut-brown maid? Good-bye!
It is not to-morrow: ah, were it to-day!
There are two that I know that would be gay!
Good-bye! Good-bye! God-bye!
Ah, parting wounds so bitterly!

"What does it mean?" asked the boy.

"I think it means," said Coquette, looking away over the moor, "that everybody in the world is miserable."

"And are you miserable, too?" he asked.

"Not more than others, I suppose," said Coquette.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Coquette forsakes her Friends.

THE dull, grey atmosphere that thus hung over Coquette's life was about to be pierced by a lightning-flash.

Two years had passed away in a quiet, monotonous fashion; and very little had happened during that time to the people about Airlie. The Minister, it is true, had published his Concordance of the Psalms; and not only had he received various friendly and congratulatory letters about it from clergymen standing high in the estimation of the world, but notice had been taken of the work in the public prints, and that of a nature to fill the old man's heart with secret joy. Coquette cut out those paragraphs which were laudatory (suppressing ruthlessly those which were not), and placed them in a book. Indeed, she managed the whole business; and, especially in the monetary portion of it, insisted on keeping her negotiations with the publishers a profound secret.

"It is something for me to do, uncle," she said.

"And you have done it very well, Catherine," said the Minister. "I am fair surprised to see what a goodly volume it has turned out—the smooth paper—the clear printing—it is altogether what I would call a presentable book."

The Minister would have been less surprised had he known the reckless fashion in which Coquette had given instructions to the publishers, and the amount of money she subsequently and surreptitiously and cheerfully paid.

"There are newspapers," said the Minister, ruefully, "which they tell me deal in a light and profane fashion wi' religious matters. I hope the editors will read my Concordance carefully, before writing of it in their journals."

"I do not think it is the editor who writes about books," remarked Coquette. "An editor of a Nantes newspaper did use to come to our house, and I remember his saying to my papa, that he gave books to his writers who could do nothing else; so you must not be surprised if they do make mistakes. As for him, uncle, I am sure he did not know who wrote the Psalms."

"Very likely—very likely," said the Minister. "But the editors of our newspapers are a different class of men, for they write for a religious nation

and must be acquainted wi' such things. The Schoolmaster thinks I ought to write to the editors, and beg them to read the book wi' care."

"I wouldn't do that, uncle, if I were you," said Coquette; and somehow or other, the Minister had of late got into such a habit of consulting and obeying Coquette that her simple expression of opinion sufficed, and he did not write to any editor.

At times during that long period, but not often, the Whaup came down to Airlie, and stayed from the Saturday to the Monday morning. The anxious and troubled way in which Coquette put aside any reference to their future marriage struck him painfully; but for the present he was content to be almost silent. There was no use, he reflected, in talking about this matter until he could definitely say to her, "Come, and be my wife." He had no right to press her to give any more definite promise than she had already given, when he himself was uncertain as to time. But, even now, he saw at no great distance ahead the fortunate moment when he could formally claim Coquette as his bride. His place in the business of Dr. Menzies had been secured to him; and his term of public study was coming to an end. Every day that he rose, he knew himself a day nearer to the time when he

should go down to Airlie and carry off with him Coquette to be the wonder of all his friends in Glasgow.

At times, as he looked at Coquette, he felt rather anxious; and wished that the day could pass more quickly.

"I am afraid the dulness of this place is weighing very heavily on you, Coquette," he said to her one Saturday afternoon that he had got down.

"You do say that often to me," she said, "and I find you looking at me as if you were a doctor. Yet I am not ill. It is true, I think that I am becoming Scotch, as you said once long ago; and all your Scotch people at Airlie seem to me sad and resigned in their faces. That is no harm, is it?"

"But why should you be sad and resigned?"

"I do catch it as an infection from the others," she said with a smile.

Yet he was not satisfied; and he went back to Glasgow more impatient than ever.

"For," he said to himself, "once I can go and ask her to fulfil her promise, there will be a chance of breaking this depressing calm that has settled on her. I will take her away from Airlie. I will get three months' holidays, and take her down to see the Loire, and then down through France to Marseilles, and then on to Italy, and then back through

Switzerland. And only to think of Coquette being always with me, and my having to order breakfast for her, and see that the wine is always quite sound and good for her, and see that she is wrapped up against the cold, and to listen always to her sweet voice, and the broken English, and the little perplexed stammer now and again—isn't that something to work for? Hurry on, days, and weeks, and months, and bring Coquette to me!"

So the time went by, and Coquette heard nothing of Lord Earlshope—not even the mention of his name. But one dull morning in March, she was walking by herself over the moor; and suddenly she heard on the gravel of the path in front of her the sound of a quick footstep that she knew. Her heart ceased to beat, and for a second she felt faint and giddy. Then without ever lifting her head, she endeavoured to turn aside and avoid him.

"Won't you even speak to me, Coquette?"

The sound of his voice made the blood spring hotly to her face again, and recalled the wild beating of her heart; but still she stood immovable. And then she said, in a low voice—

"Yes, I will speak to you if you wish."

He came nearer to her—his own face quite pale—and said—

"I am glad you have nearly forgotten me,

Coquette; I came to see. I heard that you looked very sad, and went about alone much, and were pale; but I would rather hear you tell me, Coquette, that it is all a mistake."

"I have not forgotten anything," said Coquette.

"Nothing?"

"Nothing at all."

"Coquette," he cried, coming quite close to her, "tell me this—once for all—have you forgotten nothing as I have forgotten nothing?—do you love me as if we had just parted yesterday?—has all this time done nothing for either of us?"

She looked round, wildly, as if seeking some means of escape; and then, with a sort of shudder, she found his arms round her as in the olden time, and she was saying, almost incoherently—

"Oh, my darling, my darling, I love you more than ever—night and day I have never ceased to think of you—and now—and now my only wish is to die—here, with your arms round me!"

"Listen, Coquette, listen!" he said. "Do you know what I have done? A ship passes here in the morning for America—I have taken two berths in it, for you and for me—to-morrow we shall be sailing away to a new world, and leaving all those troubles behind us. Do you hear me, Coquette?"

The girl shuddered violently: her face was hid.

"You remember that woman," he said, hurriedly. "Nothing has been heard of her for two years. I have sought everywhere for her. She must be dead. And so, Coquette, you know, we shall be married when we get out there; and perhaps in after years we shall come back to Airlie. But now, Coquette, this is what you must do: The *Caroline* will wait for you off Saltcoats to-night; you must come down by yourself, and I will tell you how to get the pinnace to come out. And then we are to meet the ship, darling; and to-morrow you will have turned your face to a new world, and will soon forget this old one, that was so cruel to you. What do you say, Coquette?"

"Oh, I cannot, I cannot!" murmured the girl. "What will become of my uncle?"

"Your uncle is an old man. He would have been as lonely if you had never come to Airlie, Coquette; and we may come back to see him."

She looked up now, with a white face, into his eyes, and said slowly—

"You know that if we go away to-night I shall never see him again—nor any one of my friends."

He rather shrank from that earnest look; but he said, with eyes turned, "What are friends to you, Coquette? They cannot make you happy."

A little while after that, Coquette was on her way back to the Manse, alone. She had promised to go down to Saltcoats that night, and she had sealed her sin with a kiss.

She scarcely knew what she had done; and yet there was a dreadful consciousness of some impending evil pressing down on her heart. Her eyes were fixed on the ground as she went along; and yet it seemed to her that she knew the dark clouds were glowing with a fiery crimson, and that there was a light as of sunset gleaming over the moor. Then, so still it was! She grew afraid that in this fearful silence she should hear a voice speaking to her from the sky that appeared to be close over her head.

Guilty and trembling she drew near to the Manse; and seeing the Minister coming out of the gate, she managed to avoid him, and stole like a culprit up to her own room. The first thing that met her eyes was a locket containing a portrait of her mother. She took it up, and placed it in a drawer along with the crucifix and some religious books to which Leezibeth had objected. She put it beside them reverently and sadly—as though she knew she never dared touch them any more. And then she sat down, and buried her face in her hands.

She was unusually and tenderly attentive to her uncle at dinner-time; and in answer to his inquiries why she scarcely ate anything, she said that she had taken her accustomed biscuit and glass of port wine —which Dr. Menzies had recommended—later than usual. The answer did not quite satisfy the Minister.

"We must have Lady Drum to take ye away for a change," he said, "some o' these days."

When she had brought her uncle the silk handkerchief with which he generally covered his face in settling down to his after-dinner nap, Coquette went up stairs, and put a few odd things into a small reticule. Then she went down stairs again, and waited patiently until tea was over and the boys sent off to prepare their lessons for next day.

Then Coquette, having put on her shawl and hat, stole out of the house, and through the small garden. She looked neither to the right nor to the left. Of all the troubles she had experienced in life, the bitterest was nothing in comparison to the ghastly sense of guilt that now crushed her down. She knew that in leaving the Manse she was leaving behind her all the sweet consciousness of rectitude, the purity and innocence which had enabled her to meet trials with a courageous heart. She was leaving behind her the treasure of a stainless name, the

crown of womanhood. She was leaving behind her her friends, who would have to share her shame and face on her behalf the bitter tongues of the world. She was leaving behind her even the pleasant memories of her mother—for Heaven itself would be closed against her, and she would be an exile from all that a pure and true woman could hold dear.

There were no tears in her eyes, but a cold, dead weight at her heart; and she trembled at the slight sound she made in closing the gate.

What a strange, wild evening it was, as she got outside, and turned to cross the moor over to the west. Through a fierce glare of sunset, she could see that all along the horizon, and high over the mountains of Arran, there lay a long wall of dense blue cloud. Underneath this the sea lay black; the wind had not stirred the waves into breaking and she could only tell that the great dark plain moved in lines and lines, as if it were silently brooding over the secrets down in its depths. But over this dense wall of cloud lay the wild light of the sunset, and long fierce dashes of scarlet and gold; while across the blaze of yellow there drifted streaks of pure silver, showing the coming of a storm. And up here on the moor, the stretches of dry grey grass which alternated with brown patches of heather had,

as it were, caught fire; and the blowing and gusty light of the west burned along those bleak slopes until the eye was dazzled and pained by the glow. Even in the far east the clouds had a blush of pink over them, with rifts of green sky between; and the dark fir woods that lay along the horizon seemed to dwell within a veil of crimson mist.

There was a strange stillness up here on the moor, despite the fact that the wind was blowing the red clouds about, and causing now this and now that stretch of the grey moor to burn red under the shifting evening sky. There was quite an unusual silence, indeed. The birds seemed to have grown mute; not even the late blackbird sang in the hawthorn bushes by the side of the moorland stream. Coquette hurried on, without letting her eyes wander to either side; there was something in the look of the moor and the wild light that alarmed her.

Suddenly she was confronted by some one; and, looking up with a sharp cry, she found the Pensioner before her.

"I hope I hefna frichtened ye, Miss Cassilis," he said.

"No," said Coquette. "But I did not expect to meet any one."

"Ye will pe going on a veesit; but dinna gang

far, for it iss a stormy-looking nicht, and you will maybe get wat before sat you will get home."

"Thank you. Good night," said Coquette, hurrying on.

"Good-night," said the Pensioner.

Then he turned, and said, before she was out of hearing—

"I'm saying, Miss Cassilis, maype you will know his Lordship iss never coming back to Earlshope no more, not even if he will pe unable to let sa house?"

"How should I know?" said Coquette, suddenly struck motionless by the question.

"Maype no," said the Pensioner, in a tone of apology. "It wass only that some o' the neebors did see you speakin' to Lord Earlshope this mornin', and I wass thinkin' that very like he wass coming back to his ain house."

"I know nothing about it," said Coquette, hurrying on, with her heart overburdened with anguish and dread.

For now she knew that all the people would learn why she had run away from her uncle's house; and they would carry to the old man the story of their having seen her talking to Lord Earlshope. But for that, the Minister might have thought her drowned or perished in some way. That was all

over; and her shame would be publicly known; and he would have to bear it in his old age.

Down at the end of the moor, she turned to take a last look at the Manse. Far up on the height, the windows of the small building were twinkling like gleaming rubies; the gable and the wall round the garden were of a dusky red colour; overhead the sky was a pure, clear green, and the white sickle of a new moon was faintly visible. Never before had Airlie Manse seemed to her so lovable a place —so still, and quiet, and comfortable. And when she thought of the old man who had been like a father to her, she could see no more through the tears that came welling up into her eyes, and she turned and continued on her way with many bitter sobs.

The wind had grown chill. The wall of cloud was slowly rising in the west, until it had shut off half of the glowing colours of the sunset; and the evening was becoming rapidly darker. Then it seemed to Coquette that the black plain of the sea was getting strangely close to her, and she began to grow afraid of the gathering darkness.

"Why did he not come to meet me?" she murmured to herself. "I have no courage—no hope—when he is not near."

It grew still darker, and yet she could not hurry

her steps, for she trembled much, and was like to become faint. She had vague thoughts of returning; and yet she went on mechanically, as if she had cast the die of her fate, and could no more be what she was.

Then the first shock of the storm fell—fell with a crash on the fir woods, and tore through them with a voice of thunder. All over now the sky was black; and there was a whirlwind whitening the sea, the cry of which could be heard far out beyond the land. Then came the rain in wild, fierce torrents that blew about the wet fields and raised red channels of water in the roads. Coquette had no covering of any sort. In a few minutes she was drenched; and yet she did not seem to know. She only staggered on blindly, in the vain hope of reaching Saltcoats before the darkness had fallen, and seeking some shelter. She would not go to meet Lord Earlshope. She would creep into some hovel; and then, in the morning, send a message of repentance to her uncle, and go away somewhere, and never see any more the relations and friends whom she had betrayed and disgraced.

Nevertheless, she still went recklessly on, her eyes confused by the rain, her brain a prey to wild and despairing thoughts.

The storm grew in intensity. The roar of the

sea could now be heard far over the cry of the wind; and the rain-clouds came across the sea in huge masses and were blown down upon the land in hissing torrents. Still Coquette struggled on.

At last she saw before her the lights of Saltcoats. But the orange points seemed to dance before her eyes. There was a burning in her head. And then, with a faint cry of "Uncle, uncle!" she sank down by the roadside.

There was a sound of wheels. A wagonette was suddenly stopped just in front of her, and a man jumped down.

"What is the matter wi' ye, my lass? Bless me, is it you, Miss Cassilis?"

The girl was quite insensible, however; and the man, who happened to know Miss Cassilis, lost no time in carrying her to the wagonette, and driving her on to his own house, which was but a few hundred yards farther on, at the entrance to the town. There his wife and one of the servants restored Coquette to consciousness, and had her wet clothes taken off, and herself put to bed. The girl seemed already feverish, if not delirious.

"But what does she say of herself?" asked this Mr. M'Henry, when his wife came down. "How did she come to be on the way to Saltcoats a' by herself?"

"That I dinna ken," said his wife; "but the first words she spoke were, 'Take me back to Airlie, to my uncle. I will not go to Saltcoats.'"

"I would send for the Minister," said the husband, "but no human being could win up to Airlie on such a nicht. We will get him down in the morning."

So Coquette remained in Saltcoats that night. Under Mrs. M'Henry's treatment, the fever abated; and she lay during the darkness, and listened to the howling of the storm without. Where was Lord Earlshope?

"I hope he has gone away by himself to America, and that I will never see him again," she murmured to herself. "But I can never go back to Airlie any more."

CHAPTER XXV.

A Secret of the Sea.

NEXT morning there was a great commotion in Saltcoats. Despite the fierce gusts of wind that were still blowing, accompanied by squally showers of rain, numbers of people were out on the long stretch of brown sand lying south of the town. Mischief had been at work on the sea over-night. Fragments of barrels, bits of spars, and other evidences of a wreck were being knocked about on the waves; and two smacks had even put out to see if any larger remains of the lost vessel or vessels were visible. Mr. M'Henry was early abroad; for he had gone into the town to get a messenger, and so he heard the news. At last, amid the gossiping of the neighbours, he learned that a lad had just been summoned by a certain Mrs. Kilbride to go up on an errand to Airlie, and he resolved to secure his services to carry the message.

Eventually, he met the lad on his way to the moorland village, and then it turned out that the

errand was merely to carry a letter to Miss Cassilis, at the Manse.

"But Miss Cassilis is at my house," said Mr. M'Henry. "Give me the letter, and gang you on to the Manse and ask Mr. Cassilis to come done here."

So the lad departed, and the letter was taken up and placed on the table where Coquette was to have her breakfast.

She came down, looking very pale, and she would give no explanation of how she came to be out on such a night. She thanked them for having sent for her uncle, and sat down at the table, but ate nothing.

Then she saw the letter, and with a quick, pained flush of colour leaping to her cheeks, she took it up and opened it with trembling fingers. Then she read these words—

"Dearest,—I cannot exact from you the sacrifice of your life. Remorse and misery for all the rest of our years would be the penalty to both of us by your going with me to-night, even though you might put a brave face on the matter, and conceal your anguish. I cannot let you suffer that, Coquette. I will leave for America by myself; and I will never attempt to see you again. That promise I have

broken before; but it will not be broken this time. Good-bye, Coquette. My earnest hope is that you will not come to Saltcoats to-night; and, in that case, this letter will be forwarded to you in the morning. Forgive me, if you can, for all the suffering I have caused you. I will never forget you, darling, but I will never see England or you again.

"EARLSHOPE."

There was almost a look of joy on her face.

"So I did not vex him," she thought, "by keeping him waiting. And he has conquered too; and he will think better of himself and of me away over there, for many years to come, if he does not forget all about Airlie."

And that reference to Airlie recalled the thought of her uncle, and of his meeting with her. As the time drew near for his approach she became more and more downcast. When, at last, the old man came into the room, where she was sitting alone, her eyes were fixed on the ground, and she dared not raise them.

He went over to her, and placed his hand on her head.

"What is all this, Catherine? Did you miss your way last night? What made ye go out on such a night, without saying a word to any one?"

She replied in a low voice, which was yet studiously distinct,

"Yesterday afternoon I went away from the Manse, not intending to go back."

The Minister made a slight gesture as if some twinge had shot across his heart; and then, looking at her in a sad and grave way, he said—

"I did not think I had been unkind to you, Catherine."

This was too much for Coquette. It broke down the obduracy with which she had been vainly endeavouring to fortify herself; and she fell at the feet of her uncle, and, with wild tears and sobs, told him all that had happened, and begged him to go away and leave her, for she had become a stranger and an outcast. Stunned as the old man was by these revelations, he forgot to express his sense of her guilt. He saw only before him the daughter of his own brother—a girl who had scarce a friend in the world but himself—and she was at his feet in tears, and shame, and bitter distress. He raised her and put her head on his breast, and tried to still her sobbing.

"Catherine," he said, with his own voice broken, "you shall never be an outcast from my house, so long as you care to accept its shelter."

"But I cannot go back to Airlie—I cannot go

back to Airlie!" she said, almost wildly. "I will not bring disgrace upon you, uncle; and have the people talk of me, and blame you for taking me back. I am going away—I am not fit to go back to Airlie, uncle. You have been very good to me —far better than I deserve; but I cannot tell you now that I love you for all your kindness to me—for now it is a disgrace for me to speak to anyone——"

"Hush, Catherine," he said. "It is penitence, not despair, that must fill your heart. And the penitent has not to look to man for pardon, nor yet to fear what may be said of him in wrath. They that go elsewhere for forgiveness and comfort have no reason to dread the ill-tongues of their neighbours. 'They looked unto Him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.' Out of all of them, Catherine. You will go back to Airlie with me, my girl. Perhaps you do not feel at home there yet—three years is not a long time to get accustomed to a new country. I am told ye sometimes cried in thinking about France, just as the Jews in captivity did, when they said, 'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.' But maybe I have erred in not making the house

lichtsome enough for ye. I am an old man; and the house is dull, perhaps. But if ye will tell me how we can make it pleasanter to ye——"

"Oh, uncle, you are breaking my heart with your kindness!" she sobbed; "and I deserve none of it—none of it!"

It was with great difficulty that the Minister persuaded her to go back with him to the Manse. At length, however, a covered carriage was procured, and Coquette and her uncle were driven up to Airlie. The girl sat now quite silent and impassive; only when she saw any one of the neighbours passing along the road, she seemed nervously anxious to avoid scrutiny. When they got up to the gate of the Manse, which was open, she walked quietly and sadly by her uncle's side across the bit of garden into the house, and was then for going upstairs by herself. Her uncle prevented her.

"Ye must come and sit wi' me for a little while, until Leezibeth has got some breakfast ready for ye."

"I do not want anything to eat," said Coquette; and she seemed afraid of the sound of her own voice.

"Nevertheless," said the Minister, "I would inquire further into this matter, Catherine. It is but proper that I should know what measure of guilt

falls upon that young man in endeavouring to wean away a respectable girl from her home and her friends."

Coquette drew back, with some alarm visible on her face.

"Uncle, I cannot tell you now. Some other time perhaps; but not now—not now. And you must not think him guilty, uncle—it is I who am guilty of it all—he is much better than any of you think—and now he is away to America, and no one will defend him if he is accused."

At the moment that she spoke, Lord Earlshope was beyond the reach of accusation and defence. The Saltcoats people, towards the afternoon, discovered the lid of a chest floating about, and on it was painted in white letters the word *Caroline*. Later, there came a telegram from Greenock to the effect that during the preceding night the schooner yacht *Caroline* had been run down and sunk in mid-channel, by a steamer going to Londonderry, and that, of all on board the yacht, the steamer had been able to pick up only the steward. And that same night the news made its way up to Airlie, and circulated through the village, and at length reached the Manse. Other rumours accompanied it. For the moment, no one dared to tell Coquette of what had happened; but none the less was her flight

from the Manse connected with this terrible judgment; and even Leezibeth, struck dumb with shame and grief, had no word of protest when Andrew finished his warnings and denunciations.

"There is no healing of thy bruise," said Leezibeth to herself sadly, in thinking of Coquette. "Thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Consent.

SHARP and bitter was the talk that ran through Airlie about the Minister's niece; and Coquette knew of it, and shrank away from the people, and would fain have hidden herself from the light, as one accursed. Now indeed she knew what it was to have a ban placed upon her; and all the old fearless consciousness of rectitude had gone, so that she could no longer attempt to win over the people to her by patience, and sweetness, and the charm of her pleasant ways. She had fallen too far in her own esteem, and Leezibeth began to be alarmed about the effects of that calm and reticent sadness, which had grown to be the normal expression of Coquette's once light and happy face.

It was Leezibeth who unintentionally confirmed the worst surmises of the villagers, by begging the Minister to conceal from Coquette the knowledge of Lord Earlshope's tragic death. The Minister, anxious above all things for the girl's health, con-

sented; and it then became necessary to impose silence on those who were likely to meet Coquette elsewhere. So it became known that mention of Lord Earlshope was not to be made to this quiet and pale-faced girl, who still, in spite of her sadness, had something of a proud air, and looked at people unflinchingly with her dark and troubled eyes, as though she would ask them what they thought of her.

Whether this policy of silence were advisable or not, it was certainly not very prudent to conceal from the Whaup likewise all intelligence of what had happened. He had heard of Lord Earlshope's death, of course, and was a little surprised to be asked not to mention the matter in his letters to Coquette; but, beyond that, he was in complete ignorance of all that had occurred at Airlie in his absence. But by-and-by rumours came to him. He began to grow uneasy. Finally, he saw Lady Drum; and she, seeing the necessity of being explicit, told him everything in as gentle a way as she could.

"And so," he said, "my cousin is looked upon as an outcast; and the good people of Airlie say evil things of her; and I suppose wonder why she dares go into the church."

Lady Drum made no reply; he had but described the truth.

Then the Whaup rose up, like a man, and said—

"Lady Drum, I am going down to Airlie to get Coquette to marry me, and I will take her away from there, and the people may talk then until their rotten tongues drop out."

Lady Drum rose too, and put her hand on his shoulder, and said gently—

"If I were a man that is what I would do. Off wi' ye to Airlie directly, and whether she say yes or no, bring her away wi' ye as your wife. That will mend a great many matters."

So the Whaup went down to Airlie, and all the way in the train his heart was on fire with various emotions of pity, and anger, and love, and his brain busy with plans and schemes. He would have liked another year's preparation, perhaps; but his position now with regard to Dr. Menzies was fully secured, and his income, if not a very big one, sufficient for the meantime. And when he went up to Airlie, and reached the Manse, he made no inquiries of anybody, but went straight, in his old impetuous way, into the room where he expected to find Coquette.

Coquette was alone, and, when he opened the door, he found her eyes fixed on him.

"Oh, Coquette, you are ill!" he said, seizing both her hands and looking into her face.

"No," she said, "I am not ill. You must not vex yourself about me—it is only I have not been much out of late."

"Ah, I know why you have not been out," he said, "and I am come down to put all these things straight. Coquette, you must marry me now. I won't go away unless you go with me as my wife. That is what I have come down for."

The girl had started, as though a whip had stung her; and now a flush of shame and pain was visible in her face. She withdrew her hands from his, and said, with her eyes cast down—

"I understand why you have come down. You know what they say of me. You wish to marry me to prove it is not true, and give me some better opinion of myself. That is very good of you—it is what I did expect of you—but—but I am too proud to be married in that way, and I do not wish any sacrifice from anybody."

"What is the use of talking like that, Coquette?" he said, impetuously. "What has sacrifice or pride got to do between you and me? Why need you care what the people at Airlie, or the people all over the

world, think of you? I am going to take you away from here, Coquette. I will teach you what to think of yourself, and then you will talk no more of sacrifice. Sacrifice! If there is any sacrifice, it is in your thinking of marrying a good-for-nothing fellow like me. It's like a princess marrying a gamekeeper fellow, or something like that; and you talk of sacrifice, and what the wretched idiots of a ridiculous little village think of you! It's absurd, Coquette! It all comes of your being shut up here, and seeing nothing, and being left to your own dreams. You are getting distorted views of everything in this dismal place. It's like conducting experiments in a vacuum: what you want is to get braced up by the actual atmosphere of the world, and learn how things work there, and discover the value that people will put upon you. What can the croaking frogs of a marsh like this know of your value, Coquette? Don't you remember how you went about Lady Drum's rooms like a queen; and everybody waited on you; and I scarcely dared come near you? Sacrifice! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Coquette."

He spoke in the old and rapid fashion with which she used to be familiar; and his cheeks were flushed with enthusiasm; and his handsome face full of daring and confidence, as though he would have

laughed at her scruples and defied the world for her sake. Perhaps he did not despise Airlie altogether as much as he said; but in the hot haste of his eloquence there was no time to be particular, or even just.

"You are as impetuous as ever, and you are as generous as ever; but you are grown no wiser," she said, looking at him in a kindly way. "For me, I have grown much older than when we went about here. I do see many things differently; and just now I must tell you what is right and best for both of us. You must not say any more about our marriage; but go up to Glasgow again, and forget all about me. If it is painful for you in the meantime, I am sorry; it will be better for you by-and-by. If you did marry a wife who had not a good name among all people—strangers as well—you might not care for a little while, but you would remember of it afterwards, and that would be very sorrowful for both."

With that she rose and would have passed him, and gone to the door. But he stood in her way, and confronted her, and said, with a certain coldness of tone—

"You must answer me one question, Coquette, clearly and truthfully. Is all that you say merely

an excuse for breaking off our marriage altogether?"

She looked surprised.

"Then you do no longer believe I speak the truth? An excuse—that is something untrue. No—I have no need of excuses."

She would have left the room then, but he caught her hand and said—

"We are no longer children, Coquette. This is too serious a matter to be settled by a mere misunderstanding or a quarrel. I want to know if you have no other reason to postpone our marriage, or break it up altogether, than the foolish talk that prevails in the village?"

"You do forget," she said, evidently forcing herself to speak in a cold and determined manner, "that the people have some right to talk—that I did go away from the Manse, expecting——"

She could get no further. She shuddered violently; and then, sitting down, covered her face with her hands.

"I know all about that, Coquette," he said, sadly. "It was very bitter for me to hear it——"

"And then you did come here, despising me, and yet wishing to marry me, so that I might not be too cast down. It is very generous—but you see it is impossible."

"And you mean that as a final answer, Coquette?"

She looked up into his face.

"Yes," she said, with her eyes fixed on his.

"Good-bye then, Coquette," said he.

Anxious as was her scrutiny, she could not tell how he received this announcement, but the tone in which he bade her good-bye went like a knife through her heart. She held out her hand and said, or was about to say, "Good-bye," when, somehow, she failed to reach his hand, and the room seemed to swim round. Then there was a space of blank unconsciousness, followed by the slow breathing of returning life, and she knew that he was bathing her forehead with a handkerchief and cold water.

"You must not go away like that," she said to him, when she had somewhat recovered, "I have so few friends."

And, so, sitting down beside her, he began to tell her in a gentle and, at times, somewhat embarrassed voice, the story of his love for her, and all the plans he had formed, and how his only hope in the world was to marry her. He did not care what lay in the past; the future was to be theirs, and he would devote himself to making her once more the light-hearted Coquette of former days.

He spoke to her as if afraid to disturb her even by the urgency of his affection; and while he talked in this low and earnest fashion, the girl's eyes were wistful and yet pleased, as if she were looking at the pictures he drew of a happy future for both of them, and beginning to believe in their possibility.

"People have sorrows and disappointments, you know, Coquette," he said, "and yet they forget them in great measure, for it is useless to spend a lifetime in looking back. And people do weak things and wrong things that haunt their conscience and trouble them bitterly; but even these are lightened by time. And the ill opinion of the world—that, too, gets removed by time; and all the old years, with their griefs, and their follies, and mistakes, get wiped out. You are too young to think that life has been irretrievably spoiled for you. You have got another life to set out on; and you may depend on my making it as pleasant and as comfortable as possible, if you will only give me the chance."

"You do talk as if it was my pleasure and comfort I did think of," said Coquette. "No—that is not so. When I did say I would not marry you—it was for your sake; and then, when you seemed to be going away estranged from me, I thought I

would do anything to keep you my friend. So I will now. Is that all true you say, my poor boy, about your caring only for one thing in the world? Will your life be wretched if I am not your wife? Because then I will marry you, if you like."

"Ah! do you say that, Coquette?" he said, with a flash of joy in his eyes.

There was no such joy visible on her face.

"If you could say to yourself," she added, calmly, "after a little time, 'I will keep Coquette as my friend—as my best friend—but I will marry somebody else,' that would be better for you."

"It would be nothing of the kind," he said, cheerfully, "nor for you either. I am about to set myself the task of transforming you, Coquette, and in a year or two you won't know yourself."

"In a year or two," she repeated, thoughtfully.

"You know I am a doctor now, and I am going to become your attendant physician, and I will prescribe for you, Coquette, plenty of amusement and holidays, and of course I will go with you to see that my orders are obeyed. And you will forget everything that is past and gone, for I will give you plenty to think about in managing the details of the house, you know, and arranging for people

coming to see you in the evenings. And then, in the autumn-time, Coquette, you will get as brown as a berry among the valleys and the mountains of Switzerland; and if we come through France, you shall be interpreter for me, and take the tickets, you know, and complain to the landlords. All that, and ever so much more, lies before you; and all that is to be done in the meantime is to get you away from this melancholy place, that has been making you wretched, and pale, and sad. Now, Coquette, tell me when I am to take you away."

She rose with almost an expression of alarm on her face.

"Ah, not yet, not yet," she said. "You will think over it first—perhaps you will alter your intentions."

"I shan't do anything of the kind, Coquette, unless you alter yours. Mind you, I don't mean to goad you into marrying me; and if you say now that it vexes you to think of it——"

"It does not vex me, if it will make you happy," she said.

"Then you don't wish to rescind your promise."

"No, I do not wish it."

"And you will really become my wife, Coquette?"

She hesitated for a moment; and then she said, in a low voice—

"I will be your wife if you wish it, and make you as happy as I can; but not yet, Tom—not yet; and you must not be vexed if I cannot set a time."

With that she left the room; and he flung himself into a chair to ponder over his recollections of an interview which seemed very strange and perplexing to him. "It does not vex me, if it will make you happy"—that was all he could get her to say. No expression of interest—no hopeful look—such as a girl naturally wears in talking of her coming marriage. And these moods of fear, of despondency, even bordering on wild despair, what did they mean?

"There is something altogether wrong in her relations with the people around her," he said. "She seems to labour under a burden of self-constraint and of sadness which would in another year kill a far stronger woman than she is. The place does not suit her—the people don't suit her. Everything seems to have gone wrong; and the Coquette I see bears no resemblance to the Coquette who came here a few years ago. Whatever it is that is wrong, our marriage will solve the problem,

and transfer her to a new sphere and new associations."

The Whaup endeavoured to reassure himself with these anticipations; but did not quite succeed, for there was a vague doubt and anxiety hanging about his mind which would not be exorcised.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The pale Bride.

THE Whaup telegraphed to Dr. Menzies for permission to remain at Airlie another couple of days, and received it. He made good use of his time. Some brief conversation he had with Leezibeth in regard to Coquette quickened his resolve. He went to his father, too, and told him of his wishes.

The old man could at first scarce credit this strange announcement. He had never even suspected his son of being particularly fond of Coquette; and now his first idea was that the Whaup, in an exceptionally chivalrous fashion, had proposed to marry her as an answer to the evil rumours that were afloat. He was soon disabused on this point. Confidences on such a point, between father and son, are somewhat embarrassing things, particularly in most Scotch households, where reticence on matters of the affections has almost been linked with shame; but the Whaup was

too deeply in earnest to think of himself. With a good deal of rough eloquence, and even a touch of pathos here and there, he pleaded the case of Coquette and himself; and at the end of it the Minister, who was evidently greatly disturbed, said he would consider the subject in privacy. The Whaup left his father's study with a light heart; he knew that the Minister's great affection for his niece would carry the day, were all Airlie to sign a protest.

The Whaup was in the garden. His brothers were at school; Coquette had disappeared, he knew not whither; and he was amusing himself by whistling in reply to a blackbird hid in a holly tree. The Minister came out of the house and gravely walked up to his son, and said—

"You have done well in this matter. I do not say that, under other circumstances, I might not have preferred seeing you marry a wife of your own country, and one accustomed to our ways and homely fashion of living, and, above all, one having more deeply at heart our own traditions of faith. But your duty to your own kinswoman—who is suffering from the suspicions of the vulgar—must count for something——"

"But what counts most of all, father," said the Whaup—who would not have it thought he was

conferring a favour on Coquette—"is her own rare excellence. Where could I get a wife like her? I don't care twopence-farthing for all that Airlie, and a dozen neighbouring parishes, may think or say of her, when I know her to be what she is. And you know what she is, father; and the best thing you can do for her is to persuade her to be married as soon as possible—for I mean to take her away from here, and see if I cannot break that sort of dead calm that seems to have settled over her."

"The Manse will be very lonely without her," said the Minister.

"Look here, father," said the Whaup, with a great lump rising in his throat, "the Manse would be very lonely if she were to remain as she is much longer. Leezibeth says she eats nothing—she never goes out—only that dull, uncomplaining monotony of sadness, and the listless days, and the reading of religious books. I know how that would end if it went on—and I don't mean to let Coquette slip out of our fingers like that—and I——"

The Whaup could say no more. He turned aside, and began to kick the gravel with his foot. The Minister put his hand on his son's shoulder, and said—

"My boy, you may have more watchful eyes than mine in such matters; and, if this be as you

suspect, I will use all my influence with her, although her marriage will make a great difference to me."

The Whaup, however, was not one to have his wooing done by proxy. During the remainder of his brief stay in Airlie, he urged Coquette with gentleness, and yet with earnestness to fix a time for their marriage. At first she was startled by the proposal, and avoided it in a frightened way; but at length she seemed to be won round by his representations and entreaties. He did not tell her one reason for his thus hurrying on her departure from Airlie. It was entirely as securing his own happiness that he drew pleasant pictures of the future, and sat and talked to her of all she would see when they went away together, and endeavoured to win her consent. Then, on the last evening of his visit, they were sitting together in the hushed parlour, speaking in low tones, so as not to disturb the reading of the Minister.

"I do think it is a great misfortune that you are so fond of me," she said, looking at him with a peculiar tenderness in her eyes; "but it seems as if the world were all misfortune, and if it will make you happy for me to marry you, I will do that; for you have always been very kind to me—and it is very little that I can do in return—but if this will

please you, I am glad of that, and I will make you as good a wife as I can."

That was her reply to his entreaties; and, in token of her obedience, she took his hand and pressed it to her lips. There was something in this mute surrender that was inexpressibly touching to the Whaup; and for a moment his conscience smote him, and he asked himself if he were not exacting too much of a sacrifice from this tender-hearted girl, who sat pale and resigned even in the moment of settling her marriage day.

"Coquette," said he, "am I robbing you of any other happiness that you could hope for? Is there any other prospect in life that you are secretly wishing for?"

"There is not," she said, calmly.

"None?"

"None."

"Then I will make this way of it as happy for you as I possibly can. And when, Coquette? You have never named a time yet."

"Let it be whenever you please," she answered, looking down.

The Whaup rose, and pulled himself up to his full height, as if, for the first time, he could breathe freely.

"Father," said he, "have you any objection to

my going across the moor and ringing the church bell?"

The Minister looked up.

"We are going to have a marriage in the Manse in two or three weeks," said the Whaup.

Coquette went over to the old man's chair, and knelt down by his side, and took his hand in hers.

"I shall be sorry to lose you, Catherine; but I trust you will be more cheerful and happy in your new home than you could be in this dull house."

"You have been very kind to me, uncle," she said.

With that, the Whaup went outside, and clambered up into the hayloft, and roused up his brothers, who were in bed, if not all asleep.

"Get up, the whole of you!" he said; "get on your clothes, and come into the house. Look sharp —there's something for you to hear."

Leezibeth was alarmed by the invasion of the Manse which took place shortly after, and came running to see what had brought the boys in at that time of night. The Whaup bade Leezibeth come into the parlour to witness the celebration; and there they were introduced by the Whaup— who made a pretty speech—to their future sister-in-

law, and they were ordered to give her good wishes, and then they all sat down to a sumptuous, if hastily prepared, banquet of currant bun, with a glass of raspberry wine to each of them. Coquette was pleased; and the tinge of colour that came to her cheeks made the Whaup think she was beginning to look like a bride. As for the boys, they expressed their delight chiefly by grinning and showing their white teeth as they ate the cake; one of them only remarking confidentially—

"We a' kenned this would be the end o't."

The chorus of laughter which greeted this remark showed that it expressed a general sentiment. Nor was their merriment lessened when the Whaup cut off a very small piece of the cake, and said to Leezibeth—

"Take this to Andrew, with my compliments. He will be delighted with the news."

"Andrew or no Andrew," said Leezibeth, who seemed rather inclined to cry out of pure sympathy; "ye may be a proud man on your marriage day, Maister Tammas; and ye'll take good care o' her, and bring her sometimes down to Airlie, where there's some maybe that likes her better than they can just put into words."

And so it was that, on a fresh June morning, when the earth lay warm and silent in the bright

sunshine, and the far sea was as blue and clear as the heart of a sapphire, Coquette arrayed herself in white garments. There was a great stir about the Manse that morning, and the boys were dressed in their Sunday clothes. Flowers were all about the place; and many innocent little surprises in the way of decoration had been planned by the Whaup himself. The Manse looked quite bright, indeed; and Leezibeth had assumed an unwonted importance.

Coquette's bridesmaids were the Misses Menzies, and the Doctor was there too, and Lady Drum and Sir Peter. According to the custom of the country, the marriage was to take place in the house; and when they had all assembled in the largest room, the bride walked slowly in, followed by her bridesmaids.

In a church, amid a crowd of spectators, there would have been a murmur of wonder and admiration over the strange loveliness of the small and delicately modelled woman, whose jet-black tresses and dark and wistful eyes seemed all the darker by reason of the snowy whiteness of her dress, and the paleness of the yellow blossoms and pearls that shone in the splendid luxuriance of her hair. But her friends there almost forgot how lovely she was in regarding the expression of her face—so im-

movably calm it was, and sad. Lady Drum's heart was touched with a sudden fear. This was not the look of a bride; but the look of a woman—strangely young to have such an expression—who seemed to have abandoned all hope in this world. She was not anxious, or perturbed, or pale through any special excitement or emotion; she stood throughout the long and tedious service as though she were unconscious of what was happening around her, and, when it was over, she received the congratulations of her friends as though she had awakened out of a dream.

The Whaup, too, noticed this look; but he had seen much of it lately, and was only rendered the more anxious to take her away and lighten her spirits by change of scene. And now he saw himself able to do that, he was full of confidence. There was no misgiving in his look. As he stood there, taller by a head than his own father, with his light-brown hair thrown carelessly back from a face bright with health and the tanning of the sun, it was apparent that the atmosphere of the great city had not had much effect on the lithe, and stalwart, and vigorous frame. And his voice was as gentle as that of a woman when he went forward, for the first time after the ceremony, and said to Coquette—

"You are not tired with standing so long, Coquette?"

She started slightly. Then—perhaps noticing that the eyes of her bridesmaids were upon her, and recollecting that she ought to wear a more cheerful expression—she smiled faintly, and said—

"You must not call me that foolish name any more. It is part of the old time when we were girl and boy together."

"But I shall never find any name for you that I shall like better," said he.

About an hour thereafter all preparations had been made for their departure; and the carriage was waiting outside. There was a great shaking of hands, and kissing, and leave-taking; and then, last of all, the Minister stood by the door of the carriage as Coquette came out.

"Good-bye, my dear daughter," he said, placing his hand on her head; "may He that watched over Jacob, and followed him in all his wanderings with blessings, watch over you and bless you at all times and in all places!"

Coquette's lips began to tremble. She had maintained her composure to the last; but now, as she kissed her uncle, she could not say farewell in words; and when at length she was driven away,

she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

"Coquette," said her husband, "are you sorry, after all, to leave Airlie?"

There was no answer but the sound of her sobbing.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Husband and Wife.

So blinded by his exceeding happiness was the Whaup, that for a little time he could scarcely tell how the rapid change of scene and incident following their marriage was affecting Coquette's health and spirits. He was so near her now, tending her with an extreme and anxious tenderness, that he could not regard her critically and see whether the old sad look was leaving her eyes. Did she not express her pleasure at the various things she saw? Was she not so very kind and affectionate towards him that he had to protest against her little submissive attentions, and point out that it was his business to wait upon her, not hers to wait upon him?

They went to Edinburgh first, and then to Westmoreland, and then to London, which was then in the height of the season. And they went into the Park on the summer forenoons, and sat down on the little green chairs under the lime-trees, and looked at the brilliant assemblage of people there—

cabinet ministers, actresses, Gun-club heroes, authors, artists, titled barristers, and all the rank and file of fashion. So eager was the Whaup to interest his companion, that it is to be feared he made rather random shots in identifying the men and women cantering up and down, and conferred high official dignities on harmless country gentlemen who were but simple M.P.'s.

"There are many pretty ladies here," said Coquette, with a smile, as the slow procession of loungers passed up and down, "and yet you do not seem to know one."

"I know one who is prettier than them all put together," said the Whaup, with a glow of pride and admiration in his face; and then he added, "I say, Coquette, how did you manage to dress just like those people when you lived away down in Airlie? I think you must have sent surreptitiously to London for the dresses that used to astonish the quiet kirk-folk. Then you always had the knack of wearing a flower or a rosebud here or there, just as those ladies do, only I don't think any flowers are so becoming as those little yellow blossoms that are on a certain little white bonnet that a particular little woman I know wears at this moment."

"Ah, it is of no use," said Coquette, with a sigh of resignation. "I have tried—I have lectured—I

have scolded—it is no use. You do not know the rudeness of talking of people's dresses, and paying them rough compliments about their prettiness, and making inquiries which gentlemen have nothing to do with. I have tried to teach you all this—and you will not learn—and you do not know that you have very savage manners."

"Coquette," said he, "if you say another word, I will kiss you."

"And I should not be surprised," she answered, with the slightest possible shrug. "I do not think you have any more respect for the public appearances than when you did torment the people at Airlie. You are still a boy—that is true—and I do wonder you will not sing aloud now, 'Come lasses and lads,' or some such folly. You have grown—yes. You wear respectable clothes and a hat—but it is I who have made you dress like other people, instead of the old careless way. You do know something more—but it is all got out of books. What are you different from the tall, big, coarse, rude boy who did break windows, and rob gardens, and frighten people at Airlie?"

"How am I different?" said the Whaup. "Well, I used to be bullied by a schoolmaster, but now I'm bullied by a schoolmistress; and she's the worse of the two. That's all the change I've made."

And sometimes, when they had gone on in this bantering fashion for a while, she would suddenly go up to him—if they were in-doors, that is to say —and put her hand on his arm and timidly hope that she had not annoyed him. At first the Whaup laughed at the very notion of his being vexed with her, and dismissed the tender little penitent with a rebuke and a kiss; but by-and-by he grew to dread these evidences of a secret wish to please him and be submissive. He began to see how Coquette had formed some theory of what her duties were, and continually referred to this mental table of obligations rather than to her own spontaneous impulses of the moment. She seemed to consider that such and such things were required of her; and while there was something to him very touching in her mute obedience, and in her timid anticipation of his wishes, he would rather have beheld her the high-spirited Coquette of old, with her arch ways, and fits of rebellion and independence.

"Coquette," he said, "I will not have you wait upon me like this. It is very kind of you, you know; but it is turning the world upside down. It is my business to wait on you, and see that everything is made nice for you, and have you treated like a queen. And when you go about like that, and bother yourself to serve me, I feel as uncom-

fortable as the beggars in old times must have felt who had their feet washed by a pious princess. I won't have my Coquette disguised as a waiting-maid."

"You are very good to me," she said.

"Nonsense!" he replied. "Who could help being good to you, Coquette? You seem to have got into your head some notion that you owe kindness and thoughtfulness to the people around you; whereas you are conferring a benefit on everybody by being merely what you are, and showing those around you what a good thing is a good woman. Why should you have this exaggerated humility? Why should you play the part of a penitent?"

Was she playing the part of a penitent? he sometimes asked himself. Had she not forgotten the events of that bygone time which seemed, to him at least, a portion of a former existence? When the Whaup and his young wife returned to Glasgow, he had more leisure to speculate on this matter; and he came to the conclusion that not only had she forgotten nothing, but that a sombre shadow from the past was ever present to her and hung continually over her life.

In no way did she lessen her apparent desire to be dutiful and kind and attentive to him. The Whaup, who could have fallen at her feet and kissed them in token of the love and admiration he

felt for the beautiful young life that was only now revealing to him all its hidden graces of tenderness, and purity, and rectitude, could not bear to have Coquette become his slave.

"And may I not show to you that I am grateful to you for all your kindness ever since I did come to this country?" she said.

"Grateful to me!" he cried. "Coquette, you don't know your own value."

"But if it pleases me to be your servant?" she said.

"It does not please me," he retorted; "and I won't have it."

"Voyez un peu ce tyran!" said Coquette, and the Whaup laughed and gave in.

It may be supposed that that was not a very unhappy household in which the only ground of quarrel between husband and wife was as to which should be the more kind and attentive to the other. And indeed, to all outward semblance, the Whaup was the most fortunate of men; and his friends who did not envy him rejoiced at his good fortune, and bore unanimous testimony to the sweetness and gentleness and courtesy of the small lady who received them at his house. It was noticed, it is true, that she was very quiet and reserved at times; and that occasionally, when she had somehow with-

drawn out of the parlour circle, and sat by herself silent and *distraite*, her husband would follow her with anxious looks, and would even go to her side and endeavour to wean her back into the common talk. As for his affection for her, and pride in her rare beauty and accomplishments, and devotion to her, all were the subject of admiration and encomium among the women of many households. He never sought to conceal his sentiments on that score. On the rare occasions when he visited a friend's house without her, all his talk was of Coquette, and her goodness, and her gentle ways. Then he endeavoured to draw around her as many friends as possible, so that their society might partly supply the void caused by his professional absences; but Coquette did not care for new acquaintances, and declared she had always plenty of occupation for herself while he was away, and did not wish the distraction of visits.

Down in the old Manse of Airlie the Minister heard of his son and of Coquette through the reports of many friends; and he was rejoiced beyond measure. Lady Drum was so affected by her own description of the happiness of these two young people, that in the middle of her narration she burst into tears; and a sort of sob at the door might have let the Minister know that Leezibeth had been lis-

tening. The Minister, indeed, paid a brief visit to Glasgow some few weeks after Coquette's return, and was quite overwhelmed by the affectionate attentions of his daughter-in-law.

"Surely," he said to Lady Drum, the evening before he went away, "surely the Lord has blessed this house. It has never been my good fortune to dwell under a roof that seemed to look down on so much of kindliness, and charitable thoughts, and well-doing; and it would ill become me not to say how much of this I attribute to her who is now more than ever a daughter to me."

"When I come to speak of her," said Lady Drum, "and of the way she orders the house, and of her kindness to every one around her, and of her conduct towards her husband, I am fair at a loss for words."

The bruit of all these things reached even down to Airlie, and the Schoolmaster was at length induced, being in Glasgow on a certain occasion, to call on the Minister's son. The Whaup received his old enemy with royal magnanimity; compelled him to stop the night at his house; gave him as much toddy as was good for an elder; while Coquette, at her husband's request, left her fancy-work and played for them some old Scotch airs. By-and-by she left them to themselves; and, warmed

with the whisky, the Schoolmaster imparted a solemn and mysterious secret to his remaining companion

"You are a young man, sir, and have no knowledge, or, as I may term it, experience, of the great and wonderful power of public opeenion. Nor yet, considering your opportunities, is it likely, or, as one might say, probable, that ye pay sufficient deference to the reputation that your neebors may accord ye. Nevertheless, sir, reputation is a man's public life, as his own breath is his private life. Now, I will not conceal from ye, Mr. Thomas, that evil apprehensions are entertained, or even, one might say, expressed, in your native place, regarding one who holds an important position as regards your welfare——"

With which the Whaup bounced up from his chair.

"Look here!" said he. "Do you mean my wife, Mr. Gillespie? Don't think I care a rap for the drivelling nonsense that all the old women in Airlie may talk; but if a man mentions anything of the kind to me, by Jove! I'll pitch him over the window!"

"Bless me!" cried the Schoolmaster, also rising, and putting his hands before his face as if to defend himself. "What's the use o' such violence? I meant no harm. On the contrary, I was going to

say, man, that it would be my bounden duty when I get back to Airlie to set my face against all such reports, and testify to the great pleasure I have experienced in seeing ye mated wi' such a worthy, and amiable, and——"

Here the Schoolmaster's encomium was cut short by the entrance of Coquette herself, who had returned for something she had forgotten; and a more acute observer might have noticed that, no sooner was her footfall heard at the door, than all the anger fled from the Whaup's face, and he only laughed at Mr. Gillespie's protestations of innocence.

"You must forgive me," said the Whaup, good-naturedly. "You know, I married one of the daughters of Heth, and so I had to expect that the good folks at Airlie would be deeply grieved."

"A daughter of Heth!" said Mr. Gillespie. "Indeed, I remember that grumbling body, Andrew Bogue, makin' use o' some such expression on the very day ye were married; but if the daughters o' Heth were such as she is, Rebekah need not have put herself about, or, in other words, been so apprehensive of her son's future."

And the Schoolmaster was as good as his word, and took down to Airlie such a description of the Whaup and his bride as became a subject of talk

in the village for many a day. And so the patience and the gentleness of Coquette bore their natural fruit, and all men began to say all good things of her.

There was one man only who regarded this marriage with doubt, and sometimes with actual fear, who was less sure than all the others that Coquette was happy, and who regarded her future with an anxious dread. That one man was the Whaup himself. With a slow and sad certainty, the truth dawned on him that he had not yet won Coquette's love—that he was powerless to make her forget that she had married him in order to please him, and that, behind all her affectionate and friendly demonstrations towards himself, there lay over her a weight of despair. The discovery caused him no paroxysm of grief, for it was made gradually; but in time it occupied his constant thoughts, and became the dark shadow of his life. For how was he to remove this barrier that stood between himself and Coquette? The great yearning of love he felt towards her was powerless to awaken any response but that mute, animal-like faithfulness and kindliness that lay in her eyes whenever she regarded him. And it was for her, rather than for himself, that he was troubled. He had hurried on the marriage, hoping a change of scene and of

interest would break in on the monotony of sadness that was evidently beginning to tell on the girl's health. He had hoped, too, that he would soon win her over to himself by cutting her away from those old associations. What was the result? He looked at the pale and calm face, and dared not confess to himself all that he feared.

One evening, entering suddenly, he saw that she tried to avoid him and get out of the room. He playfully intercepted her, and found, to his astonishment, that she had been crying.

"What is the matter, Coquette?" he said.

"Nothing," she answered. "I was sitting by myself—and thinking, that is all."

He took both her hands in his, and said, with an infinite sadness in his look—

"Do you know, Coquette, that for some time back I have been thinking that our marriage has made you miserable."

"Ah, do not say that!" she said, piteously looking up in his face. "I am not miserable if it has made you happy."

"And do you think I can be happy when I see you trying to put a good face on your wretchedness, and yet with your eyes apparently looking on the next world all the time? Coquette, this is driving me mad. What can I do to make you happy? Why

are you so miserable? Won't you tell me? You know I won't be angry whatever it is. Is there nothing we can do to bring you back to the old Coquette, that used to be so bright and cheerful? Coquette, to look at you going about from day to day in that sad and resigned way, never complaining, and always pretending to be quite content—I can't bear it, my darling."

"You must not think that I am miserable," she said, very gently, and then she left the room. He looked after her for a moment, and then he sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Churchyard on the Moor.

At last it occurred to him that Coquette ought to be told of Lord Earlshope's death. He did not even confess to himself the reason why such a thought arose in his mind, but endeavoured, on the contrary, to persuade himself that there was no further need for holding back that old secret. He and Coquette were down at Airlie at the time, on their first visit after their marriage. The Minister was anxious to see his daughter-in-law; and the Whaup, while she stayed there, would take occasional runs down. So Coquette was staying at the Manse.

"I cannot get her to go out as she used to do," said the Minister, the first time the Whaup got down from Glasgow. "She seems better pleased to sit at the window by herself and look over the moor, and Leezibeth tells me she is in very low spirits, and does not look particularly well. It is a pity she dislikes going out; it is with difficulty I

can get her even into the garden, and once or twice she has shown a great repugnance to going anywhere near Earlshope, so you must not propose to go in that direction in asking her to accompany you."

Then the Whaup said, looking down, "You know she is not aware of Lord Earlshope having been drowned, and she may be afraid of meeting him. Suppose we tell her of what happened to the yacht?"

"I am of opinion it would be most advisable," said the Minister.

The Whaup got Coquette to go out and sit in the garden; and there, while they were by themselves, he gently told her of the loss of the *Caroline*. The girl did not speak nor stir, only she was very pale, and he noticed that her hand was tightly clenched on the arm of the wooden seat. By-and-by she rose and said—

"I should like to walk down to Saltcoats, if you will come."

"To Saltcoats!" said her husband. "You are not strong enough to walk all that way and back, Coquette."

"Very well," she said, submissively.

"But if you very much want to go we could drive, you know," said he.

"Yes, I should like to go," she said.

So the Whaup, late as it was in the afternoon, got out the dog-cart, and drove her away to the old-fashioned little seaport town which they had together visited in bygone years. He put the horse up at the very inn that he and Coquette had visited, and then he asked her if she wished to go for a stroll through the place. He slightest wish was a command to him. They went out together, and insensibly she led him down to the long bay of brown sand on which a heavy sea was now breaking. She had spoken but little; her eyes were wistful and absent, and she seemed to be listening to the sound of the waves.

"It blows too roughly here, Coquette," said he. "You won't go down on the beach?"

"No," she said. "Here I can see more, and hear more."

For a considerable time she stood and looked far over the heaving plain of water, which was of a dark green colour, under the cloudy evening sky. And then she shuddered slightly, and turned to go away.

"You are not vexed with me for coming?" she said. "And you know why I did come."

"I am not vexed with anything you do, Co-

quette," said he; "and I hope the drive will do you good."

"It is his grave," she said, looking once more over the stormy plain of waves. "It is a terrible grave—for there are voices in it, and cries, like drowning people—and yet one man out there would go down and down, and you would hear no voice. I am afraid of the sea."

"Coquette," said he, "why do you tremble so? You must come away directly, or you will catch cold—the wind blows so fiercely here."

But on their way back to Airlie, this trembling had increased to violent fits of shuddering; and then, all at once, Coquette said faintly—

"I do feel that I should wish to be still and go to sleep. Will you put me down by the roadside, and leave me there awhile, and you can go on to Airlie?"

"Why, do you know what you are saying, Coquette? Go on to Airlie, and leave you here?"

She did not answer him; and he urged on the pony with all speed, until at length they reached the Manse.

"Tom," she said, "I think you must carry me in."

He lifted her down from the vehicle, and carried her like a child into the house; and then,

when Leezibeth came with a light, he uttered a slight cry on finding that Coquette was insensible. But presently life returned to her, and a quick and flushed colour sprang to her face. She was rapidly got to bed, and the Minister, who had a vivid recollection of that feverish attack which she had suffered in the North, proposed that a doctor from Saltcoats should be sent for.

"And I will telegraph to Dr. Menzies," said the Whaup, scarcely knowing what he said, only possessed by some wild notion that he would form a league to drive off this subtle enemy that had approached Coquette.

All that followed that memorable evening was a dream to him. He knew, because he was told, and because he himself could see, that the fever was laying a deeper and deeper hold on a system which was dangerously weak. Day after day he went about the house, and, as Coquette got worse, he scarcely realized it. It was more to him as if a weight out of the sky were crushing down the world, and as if all things were slowly sinking into darkness. He was not excited, nor wild with grief; but he sat and watched Coquette's eyes, and seemed not to know the people who came into the room, or whom he met on the stairs.

The girl, in her delirium, had violent paroxysms

of terror and shuddering, in which she seemed to see a storm rising around her and waves threatening to overwhelm her, and then no one could soothe her like her husband. His mere presence seemed enough, for the old instinct of obedience still remained with her, and she became submissively quiet and silent in answer to his gentle entreaties.

"You are very good to me," she said to him, one evening, recognizing him although the delirium had not left her, "and I cannot thank you for it, but my mamma will do that when you come up to our house. We shall not stop in this country always?—when mamma is waiting for me in the garden, just over the river, you know. And she has not seen you, but I will take you up to her, and say you have been very, very kind to me. I wish they would take us there soon, for I am tired, and I do think this country is very dark, and the sea is so dreadful round about it. It goes round about it like a snake, that hisses, and raises its fierce head, and it has a white crest on its head and eyes of fire, and you see them glaring in the night-time. But one can get away from it—and hide close and quiet in the churchyard on the moor—and when you come in, Tom, by the small gate, you must listen, and whisper 'Coquette,' you know, just as you used to do when I lay on the

sofa, and you wished to see if I were awake; and if I cannot speak to you, it will be very hard, but I shall know you have brought me some flowers. And you will say to yourself, 'My poor Coquette would thank me if she could.'"

He laid his hand on her white fingers. He could not speak.

By-and-by the delirium left, and the fever abated, but the frail system had been shattered, and all around saw that she was slowly sinking. One night she beckoned her husband to come nearer, and he went to her, and took her thin hand in his.

"Am I going to die, Tom?" she asked, in a scarcely audible voice; and when, in reply, he only looked at her sad eyes, she said, "I am not sorry. It will be better for you and for us all. You will forgive me for all that happened at Airlie when you think of me in after-times, and you will not blame me because I could not make your life more happy to you—it was all a misfortune, my coming to this country——"

"Coquette, Coquette!" he said, beside himself with grief, "if you are going to die, I will go with you too—see, I will hold your hand, and when the gates are open, I will not let you go—I will go with you, Coquette!"

Scarce half an hour afterwards, the gates were opened, and she so quietly and silently passed through, that he only of all in the room knew that Coquette had gone away from them and bidden a last farewell to Airlie. They were startled to see him fling his arms in the air, and then as he sank back into his chair a low cry broke from his lips —"So near—so near! and I cannot go with her too!"

One day, in the early spring-time, you might have seen a man in the prime of youth and strength —yet with a strangely grave and worn look on his face—enter the small churchyard on Airlie moor. He walked gently on, as if fearing to disturb the silence of the place, and at last he stood by the side of a grave on which were many spring flowers —snowdrops, and violets, and white crocusses. He, too, had some flowers in his hand, and he put them at the foot of the grave; and there were tears running down his face.

"These are for my Coquette," he said; "but she cannot hear me any more."

For a little while he lingered by the grave, and then he turned. And, lo! all around him was the

fair and shining country that she had often looked on, and far away before him lay the sea, as blue and as still as on the morning that he and Coquette were married. How bright and beautiful was the world that thus lay under the clear sunshine, with all its thousand activities busily working, and its men and women joyously thinking of to-morrow, as if to-morrow were to be better than to-day. To him all the light and joy of the world seemed to be buried in the little grave beside him; and that there was no to-morrow that could bring him back the delight of the days that were. He walked to the little gate of the churchyard, and, leaning on it, looked wistfully over the great blue plain in which the mountains of Arran were mirrored.

"Why have they taken away from us the old dreams?" he said to himself, while his eyes were wet with bitter tears. "If one could only believe, as in the old time, that Heaven was a fair and happy island lying far out in that western sea, how gladly would I go away in a boat, and try to find my Coquette! Only to think that some day I might see the land before me, and Coquette coming down to the shore, with her face grown wonderful and calm, and her dark eyes full of joy and of welcome. Only to believe that—only to look forward to that — would be enough; and if in the night-time a